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軍オタが魔法世界に転生したら、現代兵器で軍隊ハーレムを作っちゃいました!?
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Gunota ga Mahou Sekai ni Tensei Shitara, Gendai Heiki de Guntai Harem o Tsukucchaimashita!?

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Chapter 020 – Demon Continent

There are 6 continents in this world.
The North Continent, where the White Wolf Clan lives.
The Fairy Human Continent, where the Fairy Races (Elves and suchlike) and Humans live.
The Beast Continent, where the Beast Races live.
Hell Continent, where the Demon Lord is said to still live, sleeping.
The Dragon Continent, where the Dragon Race lives.
And lastly, the Demon Continent, where the Demon Races live.

Putting them roughly, if you put the North Continent at 12 o'clock, the Fairy Human Continent will be at 10 o'clock.
The Beast Continent at 8 o'clock.
Hell Continent at 6 o'clock.
The Dragon Continent at 4 o'clock.
And the Demon Continent at 2 o'clock.

About 1000 years ago there was a war between the union of the Fairy Races, Beast Races, and Humans against the Demon Races.
The cause of the war was discrimination and hatred towards the Demon Races.

The customs of the Demon Continent are very different from that of the Fairy Human Continent or the Beast Continent.

There are many races that can't be distinguished from monsters, like Two-Legged Lizards, Four-Arms, and Centaurs.
The discrimination against the Demon Races (especially against the Demon Races with strange appearances) was deep-rooted at the time, and as a result the war escalated into a worldwide scale.

Though there are some lingering resentment, nowadays discrimination against the demon races is not so openly done, and relations between the continents had cooled down enough to do trade.

As an example of the goods being traded, 'From Demon Continent to Fairy Human Continent' would be minerals like gold, silver, copper, iron,

and magic stones. ‘From Fairy Human Continent to Demon Continent’ would be foodstuffs like sugar, wheat, and so on.

The Fairy Human Continent also exports slaves to work the Demon Continents’ ore and coal mines.

I was sitting, hugging my knees in the hold of a ship, together with those coal mine slaves.

There are of course female slaves, but since the male and female quarters are separated there is not much conversation between them.

But I had never even in my wildest dreams ever imagined I’d be sold as a slave.
I was having my just desserts for overly relying in my modern weapons: “whatever happens I’ll be fine”———but this is too much for just one failure.

“If I could, I want to smack the me that got too cocky that day….”

But no matter how much I mull over what’s past, nothing would change.

I stopped moping over the past, and tried to escape from the ship.
But the ship left no openings to escape.

The ship we were in travelled straight, as if crossing the central sea.
The ship went by way of the Beast, Hell, and Dragon continents, dropping off goods for sale at those continents. Then it picked up new goods to fill the empty space, and went on to the next continent.

Upon reaching each port and exchanging goods, the ship anchored for up to 20 days, letting the sailors rest.

I thought to escape while we were at port, but there was absolutely no chance of that.

Magic prevention chokers were well attached to our necks.
Thanks to that it became impossible to use body strengthening to slip out, if we try to pick the lock without sufficient skill it will cast a fatal spell on us.

It will kill us unless we unlock it with a special key.

The entrance to the ship's hold was constantly manned by 2 sailors, standing guard in shifts.
Even if all the slaves were to tear down the door, the sailors would say the keyword and the chokers would tighten, suffocating all the slaves.

Once we were out at sea, we were allowed to go up on deck.
In fact, we were recommended to get some sun in order to keep us healthy.

Even if we chatted while sunbathing on deck, the sailors won't get abusive or rough us up.
On the contrary, we could get friendly with the sailors and get a share of luxuries like tobacco or booze.

Basically, slaves are treated well.
It seems they don't want our prices to go down because of wounds.

For food, we would mainly get bread twice a day, accompanied by salted meat and something like pickled vegetables.

At first it was hard for me, because of having gotten used to three meals a day.
But once I had gotten used to it, it was no longer distressful.

The number one most inconvenient thing was the rationing of fresh water.
Though they can conjure up fresh water since there's a magician on board, the slaves basically get no more than a washbasin's worth of water a day.

That water is for quenching one's thirst and to clean off dirt on the body.
There are also slaves who, in their longing for water, looked forward to the day they reached the next port.
Especially the female slaves.

After several months of being tossed about on board the slaver ship——somebody called out to me while on deck, out at sea.
It was the slave trader who bought me from the three stooges.

His head was wrapped in a long sheet, forming a Turban. On his feet, not boots – but sandals. And he wore a red vest.

He looked like a merchant from a certain RPG.

Those three had lied to him—telling him that I was a child who was caught committing a crime and was then sold.
My price was 100 gold coins, as they expected.

For that reason I was officially traded off as a slave and if I forcibly break out, I will be chased like a criminal.
Even if I told him I was tricked and sold illegally by those three, it's already too late.
Nobody would believe anything a slave says, anyway, so it's not like he'll listen.

The slave trader held out a textbook about the Demon Continent Language.
It was about the size and thickness of an English textbook.
It was dirty, worn out, and full of fingerprints, maybe because it had been well-used.

The slave trader said,

"Human kids who know the Demon Continent Language sell for a high price, so learn it."
"…….why should I even make an effort to raise my price when there's nothing in it whatsoever for me."
"Of course there's a benefit."
"Are you going to increase my share of fresh water? Or possibly give me better meals? Although I'm not particularly interested in either of those."

I answered with sharp words and a bad attitude.
I'm not the kind of person who'd be civil towards those who'd sell me away as a slave.

The slave trader continued, neither getting angry nor laughing.

"It's not like I need you to learn at all costs. You'd fetch a good price even as you are now."

“? Then why did you tell me to learn?”

Unintentionally, I tilted my head and asked the slave trader back.
To summarize what the slave trader said——

For boys my age, it’s almost certain that we will be stationed at a male prostitution house intended for the coal mine slaves taken from the Fairy Human Continent or thereabouts. Later, once we grew up, it seems that we will change roles into the coal mine slaves themselves.
It would be at least 10 years before I could buy myself back.

In reality, I have never heard of children sold off in the same position as me getting liberated from slavery and returning to tell of it.
For the most part, they died.
Whether it be accidents, suicide, or death by overwork…… they died in all sorts of ways, but they all ended up the same way.

However, those that had learned the language have a high chance of becoming lovers for the wealthy people, in other words, ladies with money and time to spare, of the Demon Continent.

Demons have a relatively long lifespan compared to humans.
So there are lots of ladies with a mostly young appearance.
They’d get three meals a day, nap time, and beds.
There is also a higher chance of them being released from slavery once they get older, compared to coal mine slaves.

“But if you don’t want to study there’s nothing I can do about it. There’s no need for the Demon Language book either.”
“What are you talking about, master! I’ll do my best to learn the language and fetch a high price!”

I bowed my back in confusion, grabbing on to the slave trader’s clothes who had turned back on me.

“——Wouldn’t it have been better if you had just honestly said that from the beginning. Here. The book. Take good care of it.”

The slave trader sighed and gave me the textbook.
I received the book with both hands.

“Call me once you’re finished with the basics. I’ll have a sailor who knows the Demon Language help with conversation practice.”
“Yes! Thank you very much! Later – I will give my best efforts to talk!

Ever since that day, I frantically started making every effort to learn the Demon Language.
Because I absolutely don’t want to end up at a male prostitution house.

In my previous life, English wasn’t really my strong subject, my grades weren’t that good either.
But it seems that humans can really learn when the need comes and they are driven into a corner.
I smoothly learned the language, quite like a fish in water.

I finished the basics about half a year after I got the Demon Language book from the slave trader.
After that I did lots of practice conversations in the Demon Language.
Thanks to that I became able to hold a normal conversation without a problem, though my writing was still poor.

Then, one year after I departed from maritime city Grey.
I was brought along from the Fairy Human Continent to the Demon Continent.

Chapter 021 – Rano Slave House

We were brought down from the ship for the first time in a year.

There were magic prevention chokers on our necks, and chains on our hands and feet.

It was night time.
The sky was covered in thick clouds.
It feels like it was going to rain, but people at the port continued their work without any indication of preparing for rain.

I could see the city across from the harbor warehouse, illuminated by a myriad of lights.
"Get on the wagon in a line. The men get in first. The women get on the wagon that's coming from behind."

An iron wagon covered with gratings pulled by 4 healthy horned horses rolled up before me.
I was promptly shoved inside the grated wagon, not even given the chance to enjoy the feeling of being on land.

We did as we were told without resisting and got in, 20 to a wagon.
The door was closed from outside, it was something that wouldn't open from the inside.

The carriage does not shake much, considering the open ground it's passing over.
Looking outside the grated windows, it looks like we're headed for the port town.
Then we were transported on the wagon for about an hour.

"……Looks like we're here."

The wagon went around to the back of a 5-floor building.
There was a signboard posted on the building, it said "Rano Slave House" in the Demon Language.

As the wagon stopped, the sound of a door being opened was heard from outside.
When the door opened, over 10 men came out to see us.
They were all wearing leather armor and were armed with swords and spears.

But what's more impressive is that all of them are of the Demon Race.
Two-legged lizard race, one-eyed race, bird race with wings for arms—these men who could be mistaken for monsters at first glance were standing in line.

They were probably the soldiers employed by the "Rano Slave House".
At the end of the path created between the standing soldiers, there were stairs leading to the building's basement.

"Once you get down from the wagon, continue straight down to the basement."

One of the private soldiers making the path, a skinhead with twisted horns growing out of his forehead, said so.
He seems to be the leader who is managing these private soldiers.

The slaves including me went down the stairs toward the basement without any resistance.

From behind, the sound of another wagon coming could be heard.
Then, new footsteps came down into the basement.

The basement is of simple make, but it was wider than I thought, and it felt pleasantly cool to walk on with bare feet.

Lamps hung from the ceiling at even intervals.
But they were not firelight.
It seems that some kind of magic is used to provide light.

The first room that we were led to was the bathroom.
The horned man who seemed like the soldiers' leader caught up with us, and showed us the bathroom.

“Now clean off all the dirt you got on the journey.”

The dressing room was about 18 tatami in size.

The bathroom was about the size of two classrooms, there was plenty of hot water inside long boxes the size of bathtubs.
Three of them had been prepared.

“Take off your clothes here. We’ll give you a towel and soap to wash your head and body. Use the hot water as you like. Let us know if you’re out of water, we’ll get you some more. Just don’t dip inside like nobleman do. The water’s for everyone’s use after all.”

As instructed, we got a towel, some soap, and a bucket and went into the bathroom.
There were 40 people washing, me included.

Hot water ran down my head for the first time in about a year.
It’s unfortunate that I can’t get in the tub, but it felt good just to get a bath.
I once again filled the bucket with water and got my towel drenched.

I foamed the soap prepared for me using the towel, and washed off the dirt I had accumulated during the journey.
Soap was supposed to be a valuable commodity in this world.
Yet, the Slave House let the slaves use it freely.

Once I had gotten out of the bath, I was given new clothes.
I wrung the towel and dried my head, then took the clothes.
The shirt and trousers weren’t new, but they were cleanly washed.

“Those who have gotten out of the bath go to the dining hall. It’s at the end of the hall, going inside from the bathroom.”

Barefooted, I did as indicated and continued inside.

At the end of the hall there was a large room—the dining hall.
It was about the size of four classrooms.
A simple but delicious looking meal, consisting of a steaming soup with lots of beans inside, thick cuts of meats, and fried vegetables, was set on long tables roughly made of wood.

An old lady spoke out from behind the counter in a halting Fairy Human Language.

“Bean soup! Free seconds! Eat all you like!”

It goes without saying, the slaves made an astonished sound.

Sitting on the long benches, everyone ate their fill of the long-desired extravagant meal.

As we finished our meals, we went out of the dining room, and turned right.
There was a large room inside.
Beds are spread out inside the room.
It seems like we’re going to sleep here.

But once I laid down on it, the futon smelled of sunlight.
I had a full belly after so long.
When I closed my eyes, wrapped in the futon that smelled of the sun, the weariness from the journey caught up with me and I immediately fell asleep.

I heard from the old lady at the dining hall the next day (in the Demon Language, of course)—generally, the people who were sold as slaves were in despair over their own future.
The despair of those brought through a long journey from the Fairy Human Continent on the other side of the world from the Demon Continent was particularly severe.
So on the day they arrived, they were given hot water baths, food to eat until they were full, and beds to sleep in.
By doing that most people’s hearts would calm down.

It seems that because of the warm hospitality the slaves received when they arrived at the port, the number of slaves that committed suicide out of despair or made an uproar in an attempt to escape dropped sharply.

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The next day, we had breakfast in the same dining hall as last night’s

dinner.
Soup filled with beans, bean salad.
Why are they all beans……?

At about noon, the horned guy called all the men except me, and they all went out of the basement one after the other.

It was decided that they were to be sold as miners to the mines at the interior of the Demon Continent. That's why they were immediately taken along the following day.
It seems that they were sold at 20~50 gold coins each.

I was a human child, and I could hold an ordinary conversation in the Demon Language.
I can also use simple magic, so it seems that they got in touch with some rich person so they can sell me at a high price.
I was to be sold at about 200~300 gold coins. If I were a girl I could get an even higher price—so the soldiers' leader horned guy explained.

That's about 10 times the price of the miners!
A large cask of magic liquid metal was about 100 gold, so that's a considerable amount of money.

Other than slaves, the ship also brings in various goods from other continents.
When they went to return to the Fairy Human Continent, they bought Demon Continent slaves, and packed the holds with minerals and suchlike and continued to the other continents.

It was a business with high return, even though there's a risk of losing their assets due to the ship getting sunk.

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"Lute, your buyer is coming."
"….. really?"

It was the fifth night I stayed at the Rano Slave House.
When I was having my dinner at the dining hall, the soldier leader horned guy seated across from me…….Obukhov, nonchalantly talked to me.

He spoke in fluent Fairy Human Continent language and it seems he is the leader of the private army in the Rano Slave Market.
Maybe because he had free time because the miners were no longer here and he didn't have to be so vigilant, the horned guy had been calling me out to talk in the Demon Language. Because of my studies, I was able to hold a normal conversation. I learned the horned guy's name during one of the conversations.

Obukhov continued his talk while scooping up the bean soup with a spoon.

"It seems they'll come pick you up tomorrow."
"Err… may I ask what kind of person they are? Maybe their gender."
"Sorry, that was a bad way of putting it. It seems we got hold of a buyer candidate. So, we don't know the details."

He swallowed the beans in his mouth without so much as chewing them.
Obukhov didn't say any more than that, and went about his meal.

Even though just a candidate, a buyer's finally here, huh….
If the buyer is a perverted guy who likes little boys, I'll kill myself.

(*—No, even if I were bought by a perverted guy, even if I wound up at a male brothel, I won't give up, I'll survive and go back to the Fairy Human Continent where Snow is!*)

Absolutely, whatever it takes!

…… but in the end, rather than getting bought by a guy, it's better if it were a beautiful lady!
In my previous life, I remained a virgin until I died.
If you include my 11 years of life after I was born again, I was over 30 years old. If my first time was with a man, and through my back door, that would be too awful!

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The next day, in the morning—I was brought from the basement to the

top floor, with Obukhov and a private soldier in front and behind me.

My hands were bound with a pair of handcuffs.
A 1 meter long chain was attached to my feet, so I could not move so quickly.
As always, there was a magic prevention choker on my neck.

It was impossible to run away with a child's body and no magic.

Rano Slave House, 5th floor.
I was brought into an extravagant room.
It was probably a customer reception room.

Leather sofa, table made of insect shells, thick desk.
There were no windows, but there were plants arranged, and paintings of scenery hanging on the walls instead.
There were also other fine furnishings laid out in a calculated manner.

Inside the room, a two-legged frog demon I don't remember seeing stood up from the leather seat behind the desk and offered his hand for a handshake.

"You've been having it hard up to now. I am the manager of Rano Slave House, Rano Merumeru, of the Frog Race. Nice to meet you Lute."
"T, thanks."

As I returned his handshake, I was surprised at the lack of moisture on his hand.

As you can see from his name, this frog seems to be the head of Rano Slave House.

"Don't be so stiff. I'm not one to eat human children."

Rano saw the look on my face, and made his cheeks swell amusingly.

It looks like he was mistaken for a monster because of how he looked, and frightened human kids many times.
Rano asked me to sit on the sofa.

“Do you want anything to drink? There’s nothing but scented tea right now, of course children would want fruit juice, I wonder?”
“No, I don’t mind.”
“Is that so? Then please sit and wait, the customer who might want to buy Lute is being taken here. Obukhov and the soldier leave the room and wait in front of the door.”
“”Yes !””

Obukhov and the soldier tagged behind Rano and left the room.
I was left alone in the room.

I looked around the room once again.
There were no windows.
Obukhov was waiting in front of the door, which was the only way out of here.

(Don’t rush. The chance to slip away will surely come!)

While inside the Slave House, the defenses were too strong so there was no chance to escape. But there might be one after I was bought.
Rather than giving the buyer a cause to be wary, it’s better to be obedient and look for an opening.

The only thing I can do now is to silently pray that my buyer is a woman.
Sitting in the sofa, I put my elbows on my knees and pressed my hands together.

“Dear God, dear Buddha, dear Tenjin! Please let my buyer be a woman, please let my buyer be a woman, please let my buyer be a woman, please let my buyer be a woman, please let my buyer be a woman—”

While I was making my most earnest prayers, previous life included, I heard the sound of the door being knocked upon.
The first one to enter was the frog, Rano.
Behind him, my prospective buyer came in.

Rano somewhat pridefully introduced me.

“This is Lute. How is he, unusual, right? A human child with black

hair and eyes. He can also speak the Demon Language, though only for normal conversation. We rarely get human children this wonderful, you know."

"Hahaha! He is certainly rare! Hello Lute-kun! You have a lovely name!"

The one who entered is a————man .

But he's not just any man.
He was wearing expensive looking clothes, but he was extremely tall. Easily two and a half meters.
Furthermore, he had well developed muscles like a bodybuilder, and black skin.

He had a moustache over his thick lips that looked like that of a cod. He also had thick eyebrows, and his blonde hair was hardened in a swept-back do.

This muscled monster man standing in front of me looked to be my prospective buyer.

The clip of a camellia flower falling down was played in an endless loop inside my head.

Chapter 022 – Misunderstanding

Lute, age 11.

Hello, this is Lute, formerly Hotta Youta.

I got carried away and became an adventurer all by myself, then got tricked and was sold as a slave. Tehe~☆

And now, a man who would be the one to purchase me was right in front of my eyes.

But he's not just any man.

He was wearing clothes worn by noblemen I saw at the Fairy Human Continent, but he was unusually tall. Easily two and a half meters.

Furthermore, he had well-developed muscles like a bodybuilder, also, his skin was black.

Even now, his clothes looked like they're about to burst apart, he had a overflowing beard, lips that were thick like a cod roe, bushy eyebrows and golden hair was combed in a 'all back' manner.

This muscled monster man looks to be my potential buyer.

I tightened my ass.

Ah, my chastity is in danger!?

(…. Hey!? Now is not the time for escapism! Besides, he's only my "potential" buyer! It's quite possible he'll refuse!)

While silently praying "refuse, refuse", I observed the conversation between Rano Slave House manager Rano and the muscled daruma.

ED: gender is indeterminate when referring to lute for a reason

“It’s become thin after a long journey, but there is no problem whatsoever with it’s health.”

“The skin certainly looks healthy. I don’t think there’s any worry about sickness, either!”

“Of course. This company always aims to provide the best of goods. It’s age is 11. It’s gender—.”

“All right, I’ll buy it! 350 gold coins, right!”

(That was fast!)

The price is also 50 gold coins higher than expected.

Rano probably intended to overcharge, and force a sale by making a discount at the appropriate moment.

But, to the one who was making snap decisions, he raised his voice to stop him.

“U, uhh, there are still things I need to explain.”

“Hahahahaha! Since he’s one that you recommended, there shouldn’t be a problem! You just take the money from this pouch!”

The muscled daruma laughed heartily and handed over a leather bag full of gold to Rano.

“T, thank you very much m’lord count. I’ve prepared the contract, so please look over it and if there are no problems, please sign at the bottom.”

“Uh huh.”

The muscled daruma received the contract, sat in a sofa opposite of me, and ran his eyes over the contract.

Meanwhile, Rano took 350 gold coins from the pouch handed to him.

The muscled daruma finished reading the contract and finally put

down his signature.

Rano confirmed the contract and gave a deep bow.

“Thank you very much for your purchase, m’lord count”

“As am I, for the excellent goods! Tell me if you come across good slaves again!”

“As you wish, m’lord will be notified first whenever I do so.”

As muscled daruma finished his handshake with Rano, he turned to me and offered his hand.

“Best regards from now on, Lute! I am Count Dan Gate Vlad! Of the honourable rulers of the night, the Vampire Race!”

“N, nice to meet you. M’lord count…… I am Lute, a human.”

“Don’t be so tense! Hahahahahahaha!”

“Ha, hahahaha……”

My hand was grasped with a strength that made me think it had gotten crushed.

It looks like it was normal power for him, even Rano’s hand was red.

“Well then, I will perform a temporary contract.”

Rano took something that looked like a rectangular seal from his desk.

He pressed that thing on my right shoulder.

“-Ksst!?”

It felt like I was pricked with countless needles.

When the seal was removed, a tattoo-looking magic crest was left on my shoulder.

“With this, the temporary servant contract is complete. If a proper contract is not made within 5 days, it will be voided and his rights will be transferred over back to us. Please keep in mind that we cannot make a full repayment if that happens. We will give you a backup contract and contract seal together with Lute.

“Then I’ll leave it to you. Since I’ll be heading back, you can send him over once the preparations are complete!”

“Certainly. We’ve been greatly helped by the Count this time, so we’ll include some goods free of charge. Please look forward to it at your mansion.”

“Hahahahahaha! I’ll be looking forward to it! Well then Lute! See you later at my mansion!”

The Count left with laughter.

The pressure in the room immediately dropped.

I asked Rano while rubbing my shoulder.

“U, um, what’s a provisional contract?”

“It’s a contract temporarily created to prevent claims like ‘They died soon after buying them!’, or ‘I was cheated!’. You see, sometimes there are slave traders that misrepresent the slaves’ health or life span. Ordinarily, the curse mark will be affixed on the same day as the contract agreement, so even if I don’t worry about it, it’ll be OK.

So a warranty period or cooling off time.

“These are the service goods for the Count and farewell gifts for Lute from me. You can put it on tonight after the contract is signed. It’s important to leave a good impression after all, even if just a little.”

I was given a paper bag.

When I looked inside—there was a black bikini thong, garter belt, and

bra inside.

As I thought, I was bought for that purpose…….

With my face turning blue in despair, I thanked Rano for now.

"……Thank you very much."

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I was currently in the basement.

I took a bath and changed for newly-washed clothes.

I was taken to the dining hall, where food had been prepared.

It takes half a day to get the count's mansion by carriage, so it's recommended to depart by noon.

Of course, in my despair I had lost all appetite.

The bean soup that was usually rather delicious now tasted like drinking muddy water.

I said my farewells to the old lady at the dining hall and everyone, then went up the stairs.

A coach had already been prepared in front of the basement door, and Obukhov and the soldier that led me up to the 5th floor reception room were already on alert.

"I'll release your cuffs before you get on the coach."

Obukhov took a bunch of keys and released the shackles on my hands and feet.

I thought that this might be my chance, but the magic prevention choker was not taken off.

The other soldier gripped my shoulder hard, so it's impossible to force

my way out. I obediently did as they say.

The coach, of course, had steel grates. It was a small coach for 4 people.

It was locked from outside and cannot be opened from the inside.

Obukhov and the soldier rode at the driver's seat, and used a whip on the two horned horses.

The coach I was placed on slowly started moving.

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After being shaken for half a day since before noon, we arrived at the Count's castle.

The castle was made of stone, it was rather high but also wide. The castle walls were so high that I needed to look up to see the top, it felt as though ivy had been growing there for many years. There was also this tower that gave off a feeling that a princess was held captive within.

It was indeed a castle for vampires to live in.

We passed through the gate and went through a long garden.

There was a large water fountain right in the middle of the road, water sprayed out beautifully from calculated points.

The coach circled around the water fountain and continued.

As the coach reached the front door, I was brought down.

There were two figures at the front door.

One of them was an old man wearing a tailcoat.

He was short in stature, about the same as me, who was a child. Two curved horns grew out from underneath his gray hair, and there were hooves like on a goat or a sheep on the tips of his toes that popped out of

his trousers.

There was an almost 2 meter tall beastman standing beside him.

From the looks of him, he was like a wolf that walked on two legs.

One of his ears was torn off, …His furry body was forged from such intense training, that an intense physique that had all its extraneous fats stripped away from his body, was revealed. His face and body had numerous scars that couldn't be hidden. wheee

Obukhov let me down from the coach.

"We brought the human Lute, a slave bought by Count Dan Gate Vlad from the Rano Slave House. These are the copies of the contract documents and the seal used for the actual contract. Please confirm."

"We've been waiting for you. Well then, excuse me—no problem. Thank you for the delivery baa~."

The old man wearing tailcoats took the documents and said his thanks.

Obukhov and the soldier bowed their heads, boarded the coach, and went back the way we came.

I, who was left alone, gazed uneasily at the two.

The first one to talk was the old man.

"Nice to meet you Lute. My name is Merry, from the Demon Race, Sheepman clan, working at the Vlad house as head butler . If there's something you don't understand, don't hesitate to tell me baa~."

"L, looking forward to working with you."

I shook his hand that was presented to me.

His name is Merry because he's a sheep, and he attaches "baa~" at the end of his sentences…… so simple.

“This is the head of the guards in charge of the defense of this castle, Gigi, of the beast race, wolf clan. He was formerly a slave, so if anything troubles you, feel free to consult with him baa~.”

“… … … …”

“L, looking forward to working with you.”

I gave Gigi a bow and he twitched his nose 2, 3 times and silently nodded.

He looked just like a wolf walking on two legs, so even when being silent he was intense.

Scaaaaaaaryyy!

I can’t possibly feel free to consult with hiiiiiiiim!

“This may be sudden, but the master and madam have been expecting you. Please make preparations to meet him right now baa~”

“Please come this way,” he said, and I entered the castle.

I walked inside the castle, sandwiched between Merry and Gigi.

“By the way, I’ve been wondering but what is that you’re holding in your hand baa~?”

“To please the master, the slave merchant gave me these underwear. The black translucent one is quite erotic. Ahahaha…”

When Merry heard my story, he stopped walking and turned his head.

“Oh dear, why is a set of black underwear needed to please master? Did you not hear anything from master baa~?”

“Hear what, exactly?”

“…From your look, it seems like you haven’t been told yet baa~”

“I, I’m sorry.”

“No no. Master is someone who doesn’t mind the small details, just as he looks, I’m sure he just neglected to explain to you. Firstly, Master already has Madam. So, there’s no need for Lute to have any strange worries baa~.”

T, thank goodnessssssssss!

It looks like I wasn’t bought to become that muscled daruma’s plaything.

Hearing what Merry said, my tension loosened all at once.

What a relief! Really, I’m relieved!

But then…. if that’s true, then why did he buy me for such a large sum of money, 350 gold coins?

Driven by curiosity, I asked Merry.

“Umm, then why did he buy me?”

“You were bought to take care of and become a blood bag for ojou-sama, who’s having her 10th birthday baa~.”

“B, blood bag!?”

My face paled, once again falling from heaven to hell.

(No matter how you think of it, a blood bag is like, food, right?)

Vampire food I remembered from the vampire movies I watched on Nichiyou Youga Gekijou in my previous life.

Merry corrected the misunderstanding involving splatters in my head.

“Rest at ease. It won’t be something horrible like Lute is imagining right now baa~.”

Then Merry continued explaining about the vampire family.

“There is a custom among vampires that they would gain a taste for blood on their 10th birthday. For the rich ones with the means to do so, employing a steward that doubles as a blood bag is a kind of status symbol. But still, for vampires, blood, along with scented tea and black tea are luxury items. They only suck a little blood, they won’t suck until you die, so you can relax baa~.”

I stroked my chest once again.

If it’s only a little bit then I’ll be fine.

After finishing his explanation, Merry stopped just in front of a room.

“Well then, a change of clothes had been prepared inside, tell me once you’ve finished changing. We will first go greet master and madam, then we will go see ojou-sama together with master and madam. So please get changed as quickly as possible baa~.”

“Understood.”

I went inside the room.

The room is a 6-tatami room.

There was only the minimum necessary furniture; a simple bed, desk and chair.

On the bed, for some reason, a maid uniform was folded and stacked.

“Why does a guy like me have to wear a maid uniform……”

Merry said that I was going to be ojou-sama’s caretaker, doubling as a blood bag.

She’s a lady. So do I have to wear maid clothes because she couldn’t relax with boys around?

Then they should’ve bought a girl from the beginning.

Or maybe ojou-sama has a hobby of putting boys in maid clothes…….

In that case, what an interest for someone who's turning 10 years old.

But compared to becoming a male prostitute for another man, being made to wear girls' clothes is 10 billion times better.

I quickly put on the classic maid uniform.

Once I finished changing, I went out to the hallway where Merry and Gigi were waiting.

With their lead, I went towards the room where the Count and Madam were waiting.

Count Dan who I met at the slave house was sitting relaxedly on a sofa, drinking scented tea prepared by a maid with hamster ears.

The beautiful-looking lady sitting beside him was probably the madam.

Her blonde hair flowed to her hips, going past the sleeves of an expensive looking dress. … Her cleavage is plentiful and it felt like it was sucking me into it, and her waist was so thin that one worried whether her organs were there.

She had a beautiful appearance, it's unthinkable that she had a 10-year old daughter.

There was nobody with such a beautiful figure like her even among Hollywood actresses in my previous life.

The Count noticed us, and vigorously stood up with a smile.

"Hahahahaha! It suits you well, Lute! What do you think, Seras? My eyes weren't wrong, right!"

"Yes, as expected of darling. You bought such a cute-looking child!"

“Fuwaa! Wai, er….!”

Madam immediately approached me, and hugged me into her valley without hesitation.

Madam had a tall stature, and I was still a child, so my face was buried in the valley between her huge breasts.

Ooooooooooooo! Booobs sooooooft!

They also smelled sweet in a different way to Snow.

I spontaneously brought my hips close.

Perhaps misunderstanding a male’s psychological phenomenon, the madam let go of my hand and released me from the valley.

I still wanted my face buried between those huge breasts.

“Ara, sorry, I put in a bit too much strength because you were so cute. Nice to see you, Lute. I am Seras Gate Vlad, of the Demon Race, Vampire Clan.”

“Nice to meet you madam Seras. I am Lute, human.”

I shook hands with madam.

The Count started talking with a hearty laughter.

“Hahahahahaha! Lute, you look very good in maid clothes! But is it too tight or too big?”

“No, it’s just the right size.”

“Really really.”

“But, why do I—.”

“Hahahahahaha! Well then, shall we go see our daughter!”

My words were interrupted by the Count's laughter.

Count Dan started walking on his own while laughing.

The head butler Merry was somehow already at the entrance, and opened the door.

"That's right, we should soon introduce Lute to her."

Madam also happily took my hand and left the room.

Madam's hand was soft and warm.

We headed towards the second floor.

In front of a pair of large double doors there were the Count, Madam, me, Merry, Gigi, and the maid who prepared tea, lined up in that order.

"We're coming in, Chrisse!"

The Count called out, but opened the door without knocking.

The room had heavy curtains inside, blocking the light from the stars.

The only source of light was the lamp beside the canopy bed.

The Count's and Madam's only daughter was sitting on the bed, staring at us.

A small stature.

Her golden hair was spread out on the white sheets.

Her large eyes with long eyelashes seemed frightened like a small animal, and started to become teary.

Her skin was white and smooth like marble, but was not unhealthy like a sick person.

The fangs that peeked from her red lips seemed slightly longer than

humans of her age.

But other than that, rather than a vampire, it seemed more proper to call her an angel that had fallen to earth and became frightened.

The girl who was to be my master was a feeble, beautiful girl, who strangely roused my protective instincts.

“Hahahahahahaha! Happy birthday Chrisse! This guy is a birthday present from papa and mama…. your blood bag Lute!”

I was gently pushed by madam, and gave my greetings.

“Nice to meet you ojou-sama. I am Lute, from now on I’ll be taking care of you and doubling as your blood bag. Please treat me well.”

“How’s she, isn’t she a very cute and nice girl? I’m sure Chrisse will soon grow to like her.”

Madam, too, started talking to her with a smile.

The girl called Chrisse, took out a small blackboard. Ran her fingers over it, and wrote.

Then she turned the mini blackboard towards everyone.

“Thank you for the birthday present, Father, Mother, but—.”

She erased the words, and once again ran her fingers over it.

“Why is a boy wearing maid clothes?”

Everyone’s eyes simultaneously pointed at me.

“…… boys are scary.”

Chrisse ojou-sama left the last words on the mini blackboard, grabbed the feather quilt and hid herself in its shadows.

Chapter 023 – Terms of Employment

Count Dan's daughter, Chrisse Gate Vlad was a hikikomori.

Both her parents were magicians over B+ rank.

However, she had no talent as a magician.

When they turned 7, the kids of well-to-do Demon Continent families started going to school. There, they learn to read and write, do arithmetic, and learn history.

When they turned 10, those with talent went to magic schools.

Those without talent went to schools of general education.

The bullying began when Chrisse ojou-sama was 9 years old.

When they turned 9, the classes for those who would go on to a magic school and those who won't were separated as preparation.

Chrisse ojou-sama was put in a separate class from her 3 close childhood friends. She alone was put in a class for general education.

Three months later—she stopped coming to school because of bullying.

The cause of the bullying was…. because in spite of both her parents having talent in magic, Chrisse ojou-sama did not inherit that talent.

Then, because her three friends had talent, she was separated from them and became alone.

The stage for her bullying was set.

After that, Chrisse ojou-sama became afraid of light and the world outside, even now when she's 10 years old she hadn't taken one step outside her room.

Her room was furnished with a bath, toilet, and kitchen. They were specially constructed after that fact.

My head hurt from Master and Madam's sweetness.

I understood the ojou-sama's pain. But why didn't they try to get her outside, and allow her to live inside as a hikikomori……

But they themselves were of course not okay with how Chrisse ojou-sama was currently shutting herself in.

It seems that I was bought as a caretaker and blood bag as one of their efforts.

Unlike people in the Fairy Human Continent, those in the Demon Continent celebrate birthdays every year until they were 15.

At 15 they were considered adults.

It's like a high school kid graduating from getting christmas presents.

Then, on the day of her 10th birthday, they thought to start with getting her a blood bag as a present, they met the slave trader and he recommended me.

Master liked me at first sight and bought me without haggling—he mistook me for a girl.

Certainly, after a year on the ship, my hair had grown to my chin, and I was almost always at my cabin so my skin was white. My muscles had weakened and my arms had become slender like a girl's.

If I had to say it, my looks are young and girly.

If that was the case, it probably couldn't be helped if she misunderstood and I didn't say anything.

Master, Madam, me, Merry, Gigi, and the maid left Chrisse ojou-sama's room and went back to the room where we drank scented tea.

“Hahahahahaha! You looked so cute, so I thought you were a girl for sure! You got me there! Hahahahaha!”

“Oh you, always such a scatterbrain.”

Master and Madam laughed cheerfully as if they just went to a comedy show.

I endured the aching in my head and asked.

“But how could Chrisse ojou-sama immediately tell that I’m a boy? Even though nobody here did.”

Madam answered my question.

“Vampires move and see better in the dark, you see. That girl has good eyesight, even among us. So she probably could judge at a glance that even when wearing maid clothes, you had the body of a boy instead of a girl.

The head butler Merry bowed his head and apologized.

“I checked the documents again, and it was certainly written ‘male’ in the gender column. It was my fault for not confirming baa~.”

“Hahahahahaha! It’s all right, it’s all right! It was my fault for immediately buying him at the shop without checking in the first place!”

“…… I could tell from the smell from the start.”

“Eeeeh!?”

I spontaneously shrieked in surprise.

It was the first time I heard Gigi talk.

As I feared, he had a low voice like a yakuza.

Merry knitted his eyebrows at Gigi’s late remark.

“Then why didn’t you tell me immediately baa~.”

“Because you didn’t ask.”

“So Gigi-san, you couldn’t do a job unless you were told to baa~?”

“I don’t do jobs outside of my charge. It usually causes problems.”

Gigi answered Merry’s sarcastic remarks without changing his expression.

The two glared at each other for a while.

The Madam changed the atmosphere that had gotten sour.

“Merry, Gigi, that’s enough of your quarrel. There’s no use fighting over what’s past. What we must think about for the time being is what we’ll do with Lute, is it not?”

“That’s right. I have behaved disgracefully in front of Master and Madam, I am very sorry baa~.”

“……”

Merry bowed his head deeply in apology, but Gigi just crossed his arms in silence.

Everyone’s eyes were once again pointed at me because of what Madam said.

If I were returned to the slave house, there was a high chance of me being bought as a male prostitute next time.

I’d rather stay here and become Chrisse ojou-sama’s caretaker and blood bag, compared to that.

My employers the Count and Madam don’t seem to be the type to treat slaves coldly.

This is such an ideal place for me.

That much I can affirm.

Because I didn't want to be returned to the slave house, I frantically made my appeal.

"Please. Let me work here some way or another! I'll do my best as a blood bag to open up ojou-sama's heart!"

"I am very sorry but I must object. Having a boy attached to ojou-sama is…. Firstly, ojou-sama is afraid of Lute. It's possible that her symptoms will become increasingly worse because of him baa~."

"I'll approve. In fact, he should be taking care of ojou-sama because he's a boy."

Gigi directly opposed Merry's opinion.

Merry was surprised and hastily questioned him.

"Gigi-san, do you really think so!? Did you not see how frightened the ojou-sama was baa~!"

"That's why I think it needs to be done. Ojou-sama already had female friends her age. It won't mean anything to add another female friend her age. But something might happen if she got a male friend."

"Gigi-san……"

The unsociable, scary faced Gigi-san with one ear torn off.

I was shaking deep inside.

But he now looked like an angel with a pair of white wings growing out of his back.

Merry calmed down his emotions and coughed once.

"I understand what Gigi-san's thinking. It's all the more reason we

should return Lute for now and look for another slave with the right requirements, is it not? The slave we buy is going to be stationed at the ojou-sama's side. We should take utmost care in choosing baa~."

The head butler Merry wanted to return me.

The head guard Gigi wanted me to stay.

I don't know who had jurisdiction here, but I wished that Gigi-san's opinion would be heard.

Actually Merry, I'm gonna make you into grilled mutton one day so be ready for it!

Having finished their quarrel, Merry and Gigi's eyes were turned to their master, the Count.

"Humm, I'll take into mind what you two said. So in that case I'll do both, I'll have Lute take care of Chrisse for 3 days starting tomorrow, if he does well as a blood bag in that time I'll keep him! If not I'll send him back!"

"Will it be alright? It would be difficult to get repayment for goods that were returned just at the end of the provisional period, and not even half the price will be returned baa~."

"Hahahahahahaha! I don't mind! It was my mistake in the first place! If I don't even give Lute a chance then this gentleman's name will be sullied!"

"Good for you Lute. Do your best and be Chrisse's blood bag."

"T, thank you very much! Master! Madam!"

I vigorously bowed my head.

It had conditions attached, but it looks like I got a chance to stay with the Vlad family.

Now I'll do what it takes to please the ojou-sama, I'll let her suck my

blood!

Still wearing the maid uniform, I became motivated and tightened my hand in a fist.

The Count and Madam watched me with a pleasant smile, Merry was dissatisfied, and Gigi and the maid watched with no expression.

Thus the fateful three days, that will decide whether or not I could stay at the Vlad house, begins!

Chapter 024 – Day 1 : Pudding

“*ya~wn*”

The first day, morning.

I woke up on a soft bed.

In a room 10 square meters in size.

This is my private room, though only temporarily.

What hung on the wall were not maid clothes, but butler clothes.

It was given to me yesterday by Merry the sheep.

It seems that I had become his subordinate, an apprentice butler attached to ojou-sama.

“…… my terms of employment are that I have to get ojou-sama to suck my blood within these 3 days.”

If I couldn’t do that, then I would be returned to the slave house.

If I were returned to the slave house, I might be sold as a male prostitute next time.

“I have to do my best to get friendly with Chrisse ojou-sama so that doesn’t happen!”

I got up from the bed, full of motivation.

I changed into the butler clothes, and when I left the basement the hamster-eared maid was already waiting.

“G, good morning, Mercè-san”

“Good morning, Lute.”

This girl who was expressionless at first glance was the Vlad house's head maid, Mercè, from the beast race, hamster clan.

Wearing a traditional maid uniform, she had her hands crossed in front of her.

She had small breasts, and a slender, tall body.

At a glance she looked the part of a capable maid.

"Sorry, it looks like I kept you waiting."

"No, I had just gotten here, so please don't mind it."

Mercè spoke disinterestedly, her expression unchanging.

"Well then, since Lute is going to be taking care of Chrisse ojou-sama for three days from now on, you will be working with me."

"Looking forward to working with you."

She was the maid who had been looking after ojou-sama until now.

Which is why I was working as her helper for taking care of ojou-sama.

Also, Mercè was positioned as my overseer.

The one who decided that was the butler Merry.

Merry presented me with a few conditions.

In order to not leave ojou-sama alone with a man, Mercè will be there to oversee.
Always do what Mercè instructs.
If I couldn't become ojou-sama's blood bag, I will be driven out with no sympathy.
Obey any other, additional terms obediently.

Those were the 4 conditions.

Because she was going to oversee me, and moreover she hardly showed any facial expressions, I didn't really know how to handle her.

She had the air of a demon mother-in-law or an office lady that would run her finger on a window frame and say "is this what you call cleaning?" once I was done with cleaning.

But contrary to my negative image of her, Mercè—

"I agree with Gigi-san's opinion. I think something might change if Lute, who is similar in age, stays by her side. So do your best so you can stay. I'll be rooting for you."

"Thank you very much! Mercè-san!"

Who was I calling a demon mother-in-law or office lady?

Mercè-san is an angel!

At her urging, I started walking.

"Then let's firstly wake ojou-sama up. Since I'll be helping with ojou-sama's morning preparations, please go to the kitchen and fetch her breakfast in the meantime. Do you know where the kitchen is?"

"Yes, I think I'll be alright."

"If you don't know just ask any servant."

"Understood."

While having that conversation, we finally arrived at ojou-sama's room.

Mercè-san knocked the door.

"Ojou-sama, excuse us."

“Excuse us.”

Without waiting for ojou-sama’s answer, Mercè opened the door and went inside.

I followed along timidly behind her.

A sweet scent typical of girls tickled my nose.

The room was dark.

Thick curtains draped the windows.

The bedside lamp was put out, the only source of light came from outside the doors.

I looked around the room once again.

The room was rather spacious, about 2 classrooms in size.

It was decorated with plants, thick carpets where your feet would sink down to the ankle, a dresser, desk, table, sofa, clothing rack, plushies, and accessories made out of real glittering gems. Inside the room there were more rooms : a bath, toilet, and a kitchen.

It seems that the Count has spent money to make a room perfect for a hikikomori.

I shouldn’t be saying this as a former hikikomori—but the thought of “You should’ve used it to set your daughter on the right path” didn’t escape my mind.

“Chrisse ojou-sama, it’s morning. Please get up.”

Mercè-san called out to ojou-sama in the middle of the canopy bed buried in a thick feather quilt.

Her golden hair spread on the bed, the innocent-faced ojou-sama breathed steadily as she slept.

Her slightly reddened cheeks seemed soft, I was driven to poke her with my finger.

The sight of a child rolled up like a ball on a bed that could fit three adults and then some was rather cute.

“Ojou-sama, please get up.”

「……！？」

……?!

When Mercè-san shook her shoulders, she finally opened her eyes.

But when I entered her vision, she widened her drowsy eyes as big as they could be in surprise.

She immediately covered her head with her quilt again.

Ojou-sama threw an uneasy glance at me, obviously on alert.

Mercè-san introduced me in order to dispel her wariness.

“This is the apprentice butler Lute who will be taking care of ojou-sama and also be your blood bag. Lute, greet ojou-sama.”

“Good morning, Chrisse ojou-sama. I am ojou-sama’s blood bag and caretaker, apprentice butler Lute, of the human race. Pleased to make your acquaintance.”

I gave her the greeting I learned from Merry last night.

I put my right hand, fingers outstretched, to my left shoulder, put my left hand in a fist behind me, and lightly bow my head.

This is how a formal greeting is done around this world.

For women, they grip the edge of their skirt with their left hand and raise it slightly , otherwise it’s the same as men.

Ojou-sama used her magic device—the mini blackboard she used yesterday.

“Boys are scary so I’d rather not have a boy take care of me.”

Then ojou-sama hid herself just like she did yesterday.

After that, she won’t come out no matter how much we called.

1st day, morning… I failed at communication from the very beginning.

▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼

While I was in the room, Chrisse ojou-sama was afraid and didn’t come out.

There was nothing I could do, so I brought her breakfast to just outside her room, and left Mercè-san to take it inside.

Mercè-san and I then tidied up ojou-sama’s breakfast and had a late breakfast at the servants’ messroom.

“So long as you don’t fix ojou-sama’s wariness first, it’s impossible for Lute to stay in the Vlad house.”

Mercè declared while eating her bean soup, bean salad, and thick-sliced bacon.

Since I came to the Demon Continent there’s strangely been a lot of bean-based cooking.

“I’ve been thinking about it too, but really, what can I do to fix ojou-sama’s wariness?”

“That’s certainly true….”

Mercè-san stopped her hands from scooping up the bean soup and pondered.

"……Lute, it's only been a short while, but it was nice to be working with you."

"It's still too early to give up!"

"It was a joke."

Mercè-san delivered her joke in such a deadpan way, it didn't sound like one.

While reaching her spoon out towards the bean salad, she proposed.

"What do you think of making her some snacks?"

"Snacks?"

According to Mercè-san—Demon races like sweet snacks very much.

Ojou-sama was no exception, she was very fond of sweet snacks.

During tea parties held at her room in the afternoons, she ate all kinds of cakes that doesn't seem to fit her small body.

So I should have Mercè-san teach me and make some snacks with my own hands for ojou-sama to eat.

If I start now it wouldn't be in time for her afternoon tea party, so I was recommended to make some jelly or cookies for the tea party that is to be held after dinner (this is also held at ojou-sama's room).

In other words, the plan is to fix ojou-sama's wariness and get closer to her through food.

"I see, it's a good idea. By the way….. there's jelly?"

"Don't they have those at the Fairy Human Continent? It's a snack made of slime powder. It's transparent like water and soft, you put fruits and other things inside."

It's made of slime…..?!

“If there’s jelly, is there any pudding?”

“Pudding? No, I’ve never heard of anything with that name. What kind of thing is it?”

Mercè-san cutely tilted her head slightly.

Humm, it seems like this world still doesn’t know of pudding.

“It’s a soft solid food like jelly.”

“It’s a good snack for the evening party. Can you make that pudding, Lute?”

“No problem. I’ve made it before.”

“Then after breakfast is done tell me what ingredients you need. I’ll prepare them so it’ll be done just in time for the evening party.”

“Thank you very much!”

Thus the “Grand Snack Operation” to get Chrisse ojou-sama to relax her wariness, begins.

▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼

I was left in charge of the evening tea party by Mercè-san, to make the food I intruded on the food preparation area.

I entrusted Mercè-san to tell ojou-sama that I’ll be making pudding for tonight’s evening party.

Next is whether or not the taste of pudding is to ojou-sama’s liking.

The ingredients for pudding are eggs, milk, and sugar.

During the time I lived alone in my previous life.

Every now and again, there were many times I got engrossed in food

and made it.

For the eggs, peacock eggs like the ones I'd taken care of in the orphanage.

Milk from hairy-headed cows.

Imported sugar from the Fairy Human Continent.

This world unexpectedly had similar spices and seasonings.

Thanks to that it took almost no time at all to put the ingredients in order.

I uttered my gratitude as soon as I started making the food.

I began making pudding immediately.

Firstly, I put sugar and water in a small saucepan, then cooked them in a medium fire.

There was nothing convenient like gas stoves so I had to regulate the fire by taking burning firewood in and out.

Once it had become thick and turned the color of brown sugar, I took it off from the fire and transferred it to a ceramic container.

I made pudding batter by mixing eggs, milk, and sugar.

I poured the pudding batter into a bowl using a tea strainer. I filled the saucepan with water, and put it on a fire until it boiled.

The caramel sauce had already settled in the bottom of the cup, so I carefully poured the pudding batter in.

After that, I added hot water, put a lid on it and left it for 10 minutes.

I took it off the fire, and waited another 10 minutes.

I finished by taking the cup and putting it inside a refrigerator.

The refrigerators of this world were the old types that were cooled down by putting ice on top.

I made some space in the fridge and cooled it carefully so that the smells of other foodstuffs didn't get on it.

Preparation complete.

All I have to do now was wait for the evening party.

▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼

The custom of having tea before going to sleep at night was called "evening party" in the Demon Continent.

Though it's called a party, because it happens at night it was not something grand, but was a private affair instead, sometimes master and the others came along, but usually it was just ojou-sama and her retainers.

I brought my handmade pudding for today's evening party.

It's the third time I went to ojou-sama's room.

As soon as ojou-sama caught sight of me, she once again covered her head with her quilt and hid behind her bed.

I expected as much.

At first I wanted to leave it to Mercè-san, and just receive her report on whether or not ojou-sama likes it. But Mercè-san rejected my proposal.

She insisted that it would be better in order to shorten the distance between us if I went into the room and made a direct appeal of making the pudding.

"Besides, ojou-sama is sure to like such a tasty treat as this. So have some confidence in yourself."

To make sure it would suit ojou-sama, I had Mercè-san taste it.

Mercè-san who did not have much in the way of facial expressions blushed in surprise at the taste when she ate a mouthful of the pudding.

Having gained a boost of confidence from Mercè-san's reaction, I visited ojou-sama's room; third time's the charm.

"Ojou-sama, this is the snack I made myself, it's called a [Pudding]"

"……"

Ojou-sama reacted to the snack she'd never heard of before, the so-called [Pudding], and peeped from behind the feather quilt, showing only her eyes.

I turned the cup upside down on the plate with slow movements so I didn't frighten her.

When I moved my hands two, three times, the pudding wobbled left and right on the plate.

"!?"

Ojou-sama became fixated on the wobbling.

I got a response.

For me who knew what the real thing looked like, it appeared rather bad because the caramel sauce became somewhat mixed with the pudding batter, but it shouldn't be a problem since it's the first time ojou-sama saw it.

"This is a snack made from eggs, milk, and sugar. It's soft like jelly, so please scoop it up with a spoon and eat it."

I put a wooden spoon on the plate and handed it over to Mercè-san.

Mercè-san took it with care, and presented it to ojou-sama who was cowering behind the bed.

“……”

But ojou-sama made no signs of taking the plate.

She was curious, but it seems her fear of the opposite sex won out.

(Dammit! Does this mean the “Grand Snack Operation” failed!?)

The moment I thought that, Mercè-san scooped up the pudding with the spoon and brought it towards ojou-sama’s mouth.

“Ojou-sama, say “ah~n”.”

“……”

At first she hesitated at the spoon she was presented with, but ojou-sama ate the pudding with a *glomp* sound effect.

“……!!!?”

Ojou-sama’s white skin became red like a flower in bloom.

Her eyes sparkled like twinkling stars and her lips broke into a smile, looking happy.

Without a moment’s delay, Mercè-san presented a second scoop.

“Ojou-sama, “ah~n”.”

She ate the next spoonful without hesitation.

Just like that, she ate all the pudding on the plate clean up.

Holding on to the scented tea Mercè-san had heated up in her small hands, ojou-sama washed down the sweet aftertaste in her mouth and took a long breath.

I talked to ojou-sama in a gentle tone in order to not frighten her.

“Was the pudding I made to ojou-sama’s liking?”

It was obvious from looking at the plate that was eaten clean and the expression on her face.

Ojou-sama, as expected, took her hand off the scented tea and wrote on her mini blackboard.

“It’s the first time I eat that snack, it was very delicious.”

“If it’s alright with ojou-sama, will you be fine with having me make more snacks for tomorrow’s tea party and evening party?”

Ojou-sama hesitated a bit, but she showed her face from behind the mini blackboard and nodded.

“I want to have pudding tomorrow too, so please take care of me.”

“Certainly!”

I made a triumphant pose in my mind, and bowed politely.

The first round of the “snacks operation” was a success!

Let’s make snacks and open up ojou-sama’s heart like this. Then whatever happens, I’ll be ojou-sama’s blood bag and caretaker and stay at the blood house!

Also, for the sake of my chastity!

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The rest was a digression.

As I left ojou-sama’s room behind, I was called to stop by the head butler Merry.

It looks like the master and madam called for me.

With questions in my head, I went to the room where they were and—

“”Hahahahaha! This so-called [Pudding] is really delicious! It was worth buying Lute even just for this!”

“Ah, darling, Lute still hasn’t been formally accepted into the house yet.”

“Hahahahahaha! That’s right, that’s right!”

“Darling is always so careless.”

The reason I was called by master and madam was because they wanted to have the pudding ojou-sama ate—so I was ordered to bring them some.

The two were having a friendly chat while scrumptiously eating the two puddings I had set aside.

The muscular, black-skinned Count with over 2 meters in height was eating the pudding in small bites, it was a rather surreal scene.

Madam was eating gracefully like a picture, but….

Those puddings were the ones I had set aside so I can enjoy eating them tonight after so long.

I certainly can’t refuse saying “these are for me”, so I tearfully handed them over.

Uuuuu…… and I thought I would be having pudding after so long, too.

Thus I shortened the distance between me and ojou-sama, and the first day passed.

Chapter 025 – Day 2: Mille Crêpe

The second day, morning.

I went together with the head maid Mercè-san to wake ojou-sama up.

Mercè-san knocked like yesterday, then opened the door without waiting for a reply.

“Ojou-sama, excuse us.”

“Excuse us.”

This morning ojou-sama seems to be awake, sitting blankly on the king-size bed.

Wearing pajamas made of something like silk, she had her slightly wavy blond hair spread out on the white sheets.

Because she was still sleepy, she had a vacant look on her face, yet her lovely cuteness was almost like a princess out of a fairy tale.

“Good morning ojou-sama.”

“Good morning.”

As Mercè-san and I greeted her, ojou-sama quickly bowed her head.

She didn’t run and hide anymore even when there’s me, a boy, here.

Instead, she ran her fingers on her mini blackboard.

“I’ll be looking forward to today’s tea party and evening party”, was what she conveyed to us.

“I’ll do everything I can and make snacks for ojou-sama.”

She smiled bashfully as I answered.

Crap, she's cute!

If I had a daughter like ojou-sama in my previous life, I would have spoiled the hell out of her.

With that thought on my mind, I went out the room for a moment to make breakfast.

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I had a late breakfast with Mercè-san again today.

Once breakfast is done, I immediately started making snacks for the afternoon tea party.

The cakes to be presented to ojou-sama was already being handled by an exclusive chef.

I began working on making something else than the pudding I made yesterday.

The cake I decided to make today was a crêpe—a mille crêpe.

It is made by spreading cream and custard in between the crêpe dough and piling it up.

Crêpes were first made in France, but the origin of [Mille Crêpe] is Japanese.

Firstly, I made the crêpe dough, and cooked it in a shallow frying pan while adjusting the fire on the stove.

Once I've made crêpes until there was no more dough left, I left them to cool.

While that happens, I made custard cream.

Custard cream is made from egg yolk, sugar, flour, and milk.

I mixed the yolk, sugar, and flour, and evened them out while adding milk. Then I put it on a low fire until it became thick.

Once the custard is finished, I cut up fruits to put in the cake. Today I'll be using a fruit similar to strawberries called a rawberry.

It tasted just like a strawberry when I tried eating it.

I cut the rawberry up into thin slices.

After all the preparation was done, all that's left to do is to coat the crêpes in custard and put the rawberry slices on top.

Repeat that 20 times, and the [Rawberry Mille Crêpe] was finished.

But in the end, I was still an amateur cook, so I had to show it to the Vlad house head chef afterwards.

The head chef, Malcolm of the Demon Race, Lizard Clan, cut off the [Rawberry Mille Crêpe] into rectangular shape.

In the end, he put a little bit of the leftover custard on top, and set an uncut rawberry on it.

Like this, it became presentable, so much that I thought that it could be displayed on a storefront. As expected from the head chef.

Ojou-sama would surely be happy with this.

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"This is the cake I made, a [Rawberry Mille Crêpe]."

It was the afternoon tea party.

I brought the [Rawberry Mille Crêpe] to her room.

Scented tea had already been set on the table with a tablecloth on it.

There are other cakes besides my [Mille Crêpe] put on the table. But

ojou-sama's eyes were entirely fixed on the [Rawberry Mille Crêpe].

"It looks so tasty."

Ojou-sama showed her mini blackboard to me, who was standing at the doorway.

I lightly bowed at her words.

While I was standing by the doorway, Mercè-san was helping ojou-sama.

Ojou-sama immediately told Mercè-san she wanted to eat the [Rawberry Mille Crêpe]

The head chef Malcolm-san had already cut the cakes up, so all Mercè-san had to do was put it on a plate.

Ojou-sama stretched a wooden spoon towards the [Rawberry Mille Crêpe] in front of her eyes.

"♪♪♪"

Ojou-sama happily rested her face on one hand as she took a mouthful.

Second mouthful, third—once I noticed, she had already eaten a whole plate of cake.

Then ojou-sama asked for a second helping of [Rawberry Mille Crêpe]

During breakfast and dinner she ate a considerable amount of food, but it seems she had a separate stomach for snacks.

As expected from a Demon Race with a sweet tooth.

She drank some scented tea to wash down the lingering sweetness, and wrote on her mini blackboard.

“Yesterday’s pudding was really tasty, but today’s cake was also really tasty. Can you make me some more?”

“Of course. I’ll do my best and make other snacks I can also make for ojou-sama.”

“I’m really looking forward to it.”

Ojou-sama had taken a very friendly attitude compared to the day before yesterday. However—

“Well then, I shall put the empty plates away.”

“-hi!”

I approached ojou-sama to take the plates.

As I did so, her body stiffened. It seems she was still afraid of the opposite sex. She still hadn’t fully opened up her heart.

I had closed some distance with the “Grand Snack Operation”, but she still hadn’t fully opened up her heart.

(Even if I keep on making snacks like this, I can’t make her open up to me huh……)

I started thinking up other plans to replace the “Grand Snack Operation” while tidying up the dishes.

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“Well, what should I do now?”

“Certainly, that is troubling……”

After the afternoon tea party, Mercè-san and I were sweeping the residence together.

In the corridor there was an empty metal armor holding a battleaxe with a broken blade, and a large vase that can easily fit two children inside.

There are also paintings and stuffed animals decorating the place.

Mercè-san and I had our strategy meeting while cleaning each and every one of them.

Once again I was relying on Mercè-san who had come up with the ‘snacks operation’.

“Mercè-san, do you have any other good ideas besides the ‘snacks operation’?”

“That’s right. What about giving ojou-sama some kind of present after this?”

“I see. You mean getting intimate by giving her a present. I wonder what ojou-sama would like to receive.”

“How about things that girls like—bouquets, or jewels?

“……but I don’t have any money.”

If I had the money to give her jewels, I wouldn’t be a slave.

Mercè-san’s look became distant when I pointed that out.

“……Lute, it’s only been a short while but it was nice working with you.”

“That joke again. I’m not going to fall for it again.”

“……”

“Why did you become silent!? Were you serious just now?! Don’t look away!”

“……If you can’t give her jewels or bouquets, I wonder if ojou-sama would be pleased if you show some special skills. Do you have any special skills you can show her?”

“Skills huh….. I can pull off my thumb like this.”

“!?”

I put my left thumb and right thumb together and slid it away, it was a practical joke that any Japanese would know.

I’ve heard that some foreigners get surprised if you show this to them.

But when I lightly showed it to Mercè-san she stepped back and fell down on her butt.

She looks very scared.

“You look surprised Mercè-san! See, I only put my left and right thumbs together and slid them off like this.”

“……I knew that from the start, you know. It’s just that much. I only got surprised because Lute did something strange all of a shudden.”

Ah, she bit her tongue.

Mercè-san stood back up with an unconcerned face and wiped away the dust clinging to her maid clothes.

Crap. She’s way more amusing than she looks.

“Oi.”

While we were having that conversation, the head of the guards Gigi-san called us out.

“Gigi-san, good work.”

“……good work.”

Mercè-san and I greeted him one after the other.

Gigi-san greeted us back with a slight bow of his head.

“Do you have any business with us?”

“How are you doing with ojou-sama? Can you stay at the Vlad house?”

Gigi-san answered my question with a question.

Looks like he was worried so he came and looked.

Because Gigi-san was an ally who wanted me to stay, I frankly told him my situation.

This is also because he might come up with a good idea.

“—I see, you got closer to her with some snacks, huh.”

“Yes. But it gets hard after that. Gigi-san, do you have any ideas?”

“Use this.”

Gigi-san gave me the thing in his hand.

It was a book.

“Can you read Demon Language?”

“Yes, I’ll be alright.”

I was speaking in the Demon Language even now.

Reading was also not a problem, unless the book was too difficult.

Personally, I’d rather read than talk.

The book looks to be a picture book for reading aloud to children.

The book was about a princess who was kidnapped by the Demon Lord of the Demon Continent, and the Demon Race hero borrowed the other heroes’ power and came to her rescue, it was an adventure-action and love story.

It seems like this was one of the books ojou-sama likes.

“Ojou-sama likes books, she used to cage herself inside the school library. Lute can use that to start getting closer to her.”

“Thank you very much, Gigi-san!”

Gigi-san finished what he came to do and silently went back to his post.

While looking at his back, I came up with a plan. If I pull it off I might be able to get closer to ojou-sama.

I told the plan I thought up to Mercè-san and,

“It could certainly be a good plan. If you do it well, ojou-sama might come to see Lute’s good points.”

She agreed.

Because of that I suddenly became fired up.

In preparation for tonight’s evening party, I called upon my knowledge of my previous life while sweeping.

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Evening at the 2nd evening party.

Yesterday was pudding.

Since there was some custard cream left from today I applied it to white bread and put fruits in between.

A perfect fruit sandwich.

Of course I made it small for the evening party.

Ojou-sama thought that there were vegetables and meat between the

bread slices so she was a little averse towards the fruit sandwich at the beginning.

Do custard cream and bread fit together?

However, she remembers how delicious the pudding and mille crêpes were so she believed in me and tried it.

"♪♪♪"

Ojou-sama immediately smiled broadly.

She happily grasped the fruit sandwich with both hands and ate it like a squirrel.

Her appearance was very lovely.

"……"

(gulp)

I made eye contact with Mercè-san.

I nodded and spoke to ojou-sama.

"Ojou-sama, there is one thing I wanted to ask you, will it be okay?"

"?"

Ojou-sama tilted her head, still holding the fruit sandwich, and nodded.

She gave the OK sign.

I slowly cut in.

"Actually, I met the head of the guards Gigi-san while sweeping today and I heard that ojou-sama likes to read picture books. If it's alright with you, I'd like to tell you a story that is well known in my country. Would you like to hear?"

Ojou-sama nodded, smiling with her whole face.

In my heart I made a victory pose.

I cleared my throat and immediately told her a story I remembered from my previous life.

It seems like it's best to tell her stories she'd like, like "Cinderella" "Snow White" or "Romeo and Juliet".

I slowly started telling the story of "Cinderella" as the young lady sipped on her scented tea.

"Well then…. Once upon a time and place, there was a young girl named Cinderella—"

When I finished telling ojou-sama the story of "Cinderella", she clapped her hands, her eyes bright.

It seems like she understood it just fine.

It was the fairy tale's author, not me, that made it enjoyable, but I was still happy that she liked it. It's like the feeling of reading a picture book aloud to a child.

I continued, and told her the stories of "Snow White" and "Romeo and Juliet".

When I told her "Romeo and Juliet", tears welled up in ojou-sama's eyes that were bathed in the magic lamp's light.

'Did I fail!?', I panicked, but it seems that she was moved by the story and teared up.

She wiped her eyes using a handkerchief Mercè-san handed her.

I looked at them and silently stroked my chest.

"Well then, it's become late so we should end it here for tonight. If it's

alright with ojou-sama, would you like me to tell you another story at tomorrow's evening party?"

"Can't you tell me just one more story?"

Ojou-sama wrote on her mini blackboard, stood up from her seat and pressed it right beside me. Mercè-san and I looked at each other in surprise despite being in front of ojou-sama because of her actions.

"Can't you?"

Ojou-sama took it as a no and her face became gloomy.

I hastily denied it.

"No, there's no problem. Well then, I shall tell ojou-sama one last story."

As I said that ojou-sama's expression completely changed and became bright.

Then she, without returning to her seat, wrapped herself in her quilt and rolled down on the bed.

Then she urged me to come beside the bed.

I then brought a chair and sat down beside the bed as ordered.

Ojou-sama looked up at me with an expression that would fit the term "excited".

(A story that ojou-sama would like like "Cinderella" "Snow White" and "Romeo and Juliet" huh……)

Normally I would gradually run out of story material, but in my old life I had not only that but also anime, light novels, and manga.

I still had a lot of story material to use.

I folded my arms and pondered a little.

I thought of a story ojou-sama would like and turned towards her.

“Well then, I will finally tell you the best story I saved for last.”

“I’m looking forward to it.”

Ojou-sama skilfully wrote on the mini blackboard while lying down.

I cleared my throat, and after introducing one of the most famous stories in my country, I said the title.

“Then the last story for tonight will be—‘La○○ta: Castle in the Sky’.”

Chapter 026 – 3rd Day – Last Day: Potato Chips

On the third day, morning.

Slipping out of bed, I changed into my butler clothes.

It is said that human beings could adapt to any kind of environment……I have surely adapted to acting as a butler recently. I'm simply happy that Chrisse ojou-sama is pleased about it.

Of course, it is also due to the good environment.

Both the Master and his wife are as open hearted and kind as masters go.

Head butler Merry still kept his distance from me, although he does not "create trouble to chase me out" like in shoujo manga. He just keeps an eye on me.

Head security Gigi-san and head maid Mercè-san gave their cooperation in helping me get closer to ojou-sama, I was really taken care of in the past 2 days.

If the 2 of them aren't here, ojou-sama would still be afraid of me.

Once things have settled down, I would like to express my gratitude to the both of them.

Etching this thought into my heart, I check for wrinkles after changing into my butler clothes.

Opening my bedroom door, I greeted the waiting Mercè.

"Good Morning."

"Good Morning, Lute. Then, let's wake up ojou-sama."

It is now the promised third day. Need to be fired up.

Thus begins a day in the Vlad house.

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I entered ojou-sama's room.

She's still asleep due to listening to my story until late night, yesterday.

There's still plenty of room even if 3 adults were to sleep on the canopy bed.

Ojou-sama's eyelids are closed, eyelashes quivering.

Cheeks flushed in cinnabar red, lips red as rose and moist.

Blonde hair spread on the pillow creates an illusion of a divine princess from fairy tales.

Even so, her sleeping face is surely on the level where it could be labelled as 'Angel's sleeping face' in art galleries.

Though I intended to observe longer, Mercè-san proceeded to wake her up.

"Good morning ojou-sama, please wake up, it's morning."

Mercè-san called out, pulling off the futon.

Like a cat feeling cold, ojou-sama cutely curled up.

However, Mercè-san gave pursuit without mercy.

"Ojou-sama, please wake up quickly. Today is the day your have acquaintances visiting. Waking up so late will cause them to wait for you, is that alright?"

Ojou-sama reacted to those words and raises her body slowly.

Eyes only half open, still noticeably sleepy.

“Good morning, ojou-sama.”

“Good morning.”

Ojou-sama seems to be sleepy, and the words on her mini blackboard looked strange.

But despite her sleepy state, today she didn’t become afraid when I drew near, unlike yesterday or the day before.

I felt a great sense of achievement and in my heart, I made a pose of pumping my fist into the air.

With sleepy eyes, ojou-sama started writing.

“Today Karen and the others are coming for afternoon tea party, could you make the ‘crepes’ cake that we ate yesterday?”

“I don’t mind, who are these ‘Karen-sama and the others’?”

“They are ojou-sama’s childhood friends. The 3 of them are girls and of the same age as ojou-sama.”

Mercè-san explained.

So they are ojou-sama’s same-aged childhood friends, huh.

Furthermore the words written on ojou-sama’s mini blackboard.

“Lute please do attend the tea party too. The story from last night was the most interesting, I want everyone to hear all of it.”

“Yesterday’s……ah, barusu huh.”

“Yes, barusu♪”

Ojou-sama merrily wrote on the mini blackboard.

I introduced these as stories popular in my home town, preemptively substituting trains, guns, cars, and radar to their equivalents in this world, but they still seem pretty interesting.

This is the first time I see ojou-sama being so happy.

Apparently Studio Ghibli works even in an alternative world.

That's seriously awesome, Ghibli.

Caught in the moment, I attempted to open the thick curtain, which was like a dark screen, to have the sunlight shine onto ojou-sama.

Ojou-sama whilst happily writing characters noticed my intention and covered her eye.

"My eye~, My eye~"

"As expected of ojou-sama."

It has been 11 years since I have been reborn into this alternate world.

I happily enjoyed exchanging otaku communication after such a long time.

Ojou-sama and I laughed at each other while making poses of holding down our eyes.

Looking at our figures, Mercè-san face hardened with surprise.

As I opened the curtain, I caught her expression at the edge of my sight, though I do not understand her surprise, for now I'll just show ojou-sama my smile.

"Thus please allow me to tell my stories during the afternoon tea party."

Ojou-sama smiled happily as she hears my answer.

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After ojou-sama's care is completed with Mercè-san, we had breakfast slowly.

I headed into the kitchen as soon as I finished eating.

Ingredients are lined up in a corner of the kitchen, which is now for my exclusive use.

Ojou-sama wanted to have the [Mille Crêpe] from yesterday, during her afternoon tea party.

Hearing that it is on the childhood friends' request, caused me to feel fired up about making the [Mille Crêpe].

The crêpe from yesterday had rawberries sandwiched between the layers, today I decided to mash and mix them into the batter.

The crêpe layer was dyed pinkish.

I requested the lizardman head chef, sweet-toothed Malcolm-san to light the stove. Even though he is not a magician, he's still able to use simple magic for cooking.

The fire is controlled by adding or removing firewood.

A few maids offered their help as they worried about me being a child but I declined them gently.

Although I am busy with preparation for ojou-sama's friends, it's not like it's so bad that I need their help.

I made the crêpe the same way as I did yesterday.

After I am finished with crêpe batter, I left it to cool for a moment.

While the batter is left to be cooled, I finished making the custard cream quickly.

I had not only taken rawberries out of the refrigerator, but other fruits

too.

I finished slicing the fruits thinly as they are to be sandwiched between the layers.

Next I smeared the custard cream on the crêpe, placed the fruit on top, and added another layer of crêpe, a process which I repeated.

When I'm done, I requested head chef Malcolm-san to help me cut the [Mille Crêpe] into a heart shape.

Finally, Malcolm-san decorated the [Mille Crêpe] with the leftover fruit and custard cream.

[Heart-shaped Mille Crêpe with seasonal fruits] completed!

As the batter is pink in color, it would be so wasteful to eat such a cute thing if I do say so myself. To that, I am very grateful to Malcolm-san for the decorations.

As ojou-sama's friends are all girls, I think this will be received pretty well.

I gave my thanks to Malcolm-san, and asked if he could help me create one more snack.

I placed a deep pot on the stove, and poured oil in—

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Ojou-sama's friends have arrived.

They exchanged simple greetings with the master and madam before proceeding towards ojou-sama's room.

Normally when guests are invited to tea parties, it would be held in the garden or at the terrace.

However due to ojou-sama being unable to leave her room due to the trauma of getting bullied, her parties would normally be held in her room.

Her friends knew of the circumstances, and this is not the first time they have done so.

Without even a twitch of eyebrows, they were escorted in.

Ojou-sama received the guests in her room.

As expected of a tea party with guests, she is now in her casual clothes instead of the normal pajamas. The light blue one-piece dress is well matched with her blonde hair and crystal clear skin, making her very lovely.

The dark-screen-like curtain stayed down.

The room is being illuminated through the power of magic.

Mercè-san and I participated in the tea party as stewards.

Their piercing gazes landed on the human child whom they are not familiar with.

“Nice to meet you, I am the butler apprentice, Lute from the human race. Glad to make your acquaintance.”

I placed my right hand on my chest, the left hand behind me, and quickly bowed my head in greeting.

Ojou-sama introduced her 3 childhood friends to me.

Bunny Bloomfield of the 3-eyed race.

At first glance, her physique looked like those of a cute human girl, however there is a visible eye on her forehead. That’s why they’re named the 3-eyed race.

Her family is running a currency exchange business.

As such she is very proud of her skill in counting money quickly.

“It is so unexpected that Chrisse-chan employed a human as a butler, and a male one too.”

The next person belongs to the Lamia race with a lower body of a snake and an upper body of a human, Muir Head.

“Isn’t it alright, he seems like a kind and pleasant person. As always, the Earl has a good eye for character.”

She gave her opinion leisurely while sticking out her red snake tongue.

Muir’s family seems to own a mine.

Her lower body, which was of a snake was not covered while her upper body wore a simple apparel that can be easily slid on, similar to a kimono. Her breasts are so big that one would not think of her to be of the same age as ojou-sama.

The 2 of them seems to be very friendly, but the last girl is showing an unhappy face.

Karen Bishop of the Centaur race.

She has the lower body of a horse and the upper body of a human girl.

Her hairstyle is tied in a long ponytail matching her race.

She did not sit on a chair but instead folded her legs on the floor.

“I don’t want to meddle with other families’ employees, but if you ever lay your hands on Chrisse I’ll never let you off easy.”

Is what she said in a threatening voice.

Her tone is like that of a samurai.

Her family does the manufacturing and sale of large-sized weapons and armor. Her race also deals with mercenary work, resulting in her (Karen) picking up martial arts from a very young age, which is how she

ended up having this tone of voice.

Ojou-sama made a follow up after Karen.

“Lute is a nice person. He’s also good at making snacks, I had him make some for today’s tea party on a whim, too..”

In response to ojou-sama’s words, I lined the [Heart-shaped Mille Crêpe with seasonal fruits] and [Potato Chips (lightly salted)] on the table.

“Wow, so cute” Bunny of the 3 eyed race lets out in her girly voice.

“Hm, the looks aren’t too bad. The looks”, says Karen Bishop of the Centaur race.

“Karen is really……. However it is such a cute looking cake. But, this is……. is this potato?” Muir the Lamia tilted her head in wonder.

“That is correct. It is a snack called [Potato Chips]. It is made by slicing potato into thin slices before frying it with oil, then adding salt. Though it is not sweet, it has quite an addictive taste.”

The potatoes here look mostly the same as those in my previous life.

I just wanted to try it out, but the potato chips turned out just fine.

The flavor was given endorsement by Malcolm-san who tasted it.

I was fired up because of the impending arrival of ojou-sama’s friends and developed a new menu.

Swiftly, ojou-sama stretched her hand towards the [Potato Chips] from the new menu.

“It’s crispy, so delicious.”

She wiped her fingertips with a handkerchief and merrily wrote on her mini blackboard.

The other 3 also stretch out their hands, and they unanimously said

that it was delicious.

In the mean time, Mercè-san brewed scented tea for everyone.

Next, I cut the heart shaped mille crêpe and distributed all of it to ojou-sama and friends.

It was performed so brilliantly, it is not an exaggeration to say that it's a form of art.

"Although the [Potato Chips] are delicious, the cake is also tasty."

"This repetition of sweetness and saltiness is so irresistable."

The 3 eyed Bunny exclaimed in delight while eating the cake and potato chips alternatingly.

"It is just as Bunny-chan said." ojou-sama said as she followed suit.

"……Kuh"

Karen showed an expression of "This is so frustrating, but I'll eat it anyway", as she ate the desserts.

(Even though it would have been alright to eat it normally…..)

Muir the Lamia kept sending me amorous glances as she sipped the scented tea.

"Were you called Lute-san? I'm so envious of Chrisse-san. To be able to eat such delicious food. If possible I would scout Lute-san to our house."

"Even if Muir-chan asks, it is still impossible. As Lute-san is already the butler of our house."

"Fufufu, that is so regrettable."

Ojou-sama once again moved her fingers over the mini blackboard.

"Lute-san is not only excellent in cooking, he's also apt in storytelling.

Yesterday I listened to many interesting stories that I have never heard before. It is especially recommended to Bunny-chan."

"It won't be wrong if it is by Chrisse-chan's recommendation. The book that I was lent previously was very interesting."

Bunny of the three-eyed race seems to be ojou-sama's fellow book lover.

However, someone poured cold water on the 2 of them.

"What Chrisse recommended to Bunny is a story where the hero saves the princess, isn't it? If it is me, I will prefer one where the blood gushes and the flesh was rent."

"Karen shouldn't be one to talk. You only read books that are about heroic tales."

Muir rebuked her slightly.

Ojou-sama wrote on the mini blackboard.

"Then, does Lute know of any heroic tales that Karen would enjoy?"

I was lost in thought at ojou-sama's question.

A story that a martial artist type girl like Karen would enjoy…….

Then this should be perfect.

I cleared my throat to gain the attention of ojou-sama and friends.

Then I introduced it as a well-known story that is often told in my country and continued.

It might be presumptuous of me, but allow me to tell you of a story. The title of the story is [Chūshingura] .

There was a movie that starred Keanu Reeves about it too, labelled as "47 Ronin". – Sarah

The weapons and tools are substituted to their equivalents in this alternate world, so that it will be easier for them to imagine.

“Wonderful! The 47 ronin are the very example of loyal retainers!”

The martial girl Karen was by the time I finished telling the story worn out from crying.

Especially the last part where Ōishi Kuranosuke’s group ended their own lives caused an outburst of tears.

Her tears flowed continuously without care of being seen by the others.

As expected, ojou-sama and the two other girls were creeped out because of Karen’s crying.

After Karen wiped her tears with a handkerchief, she lowered her head towards Lute.

“Thank you for telling such an amazing story. I would like to have your forgiveness on the rudeness I showed earlier. I was being too stern because I was worried of a male by Chrisse’s side. Since you can create such delicious cakes and told such a wonderful story, there’s no way you’re a bad person!”

With just cake and a story! She’s too easily bought !

Of course, I didn’t say that out loud and only replied with a smile.

“I did not take it to heart, so Karen-sama, please don’t fret over it.”

A bright smile appeared on Karen’s face upon hearing my reply.

After that, it was girls talk until the evening.

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We ate dinner after her friends returned home.

After we ate, ojou-sama went straight for the futon without having a late night party.

“I’m sleepy because I was up late yesterday, so I’ll go to bed now.”

I think the lack of sleep and the noisy conversation with childhood friends made her tired.

But if she sleeps as it is I will be returned to the Rano slave market tomorrow!

“Ojou-sama, to do this before sleep, I’m very sorry. But to be honest I have one wish for ojou-sama…”

“A wish? Please say it if it’s something I can do.”

With a friendly smile ojou-sama runs her finger on the mini blackboard.

I think the distance to ojou-sama was closed very much in these 3 days.

But if she refused… Simply thinking about it makes my stomach hurt.

I requested to ojou-sama while suppressing the trembling in my voice.

“…It’s already the 3rd day since I became ojou-sama’s aid. Today is the day of the deadline. Therefore I want ojou-sama to treat me as a blood bag and suck blood from me.”

Ojou sama was about to write letters on her mini blackboard but her finger stopped.

“……”

Ojou-sama looked my way. Straight at me.

Her eye’s color made my heart beat faster.

I feel as if I'm drawn in by Chrisse ojou-sama's moist eyes.

"…Lute, come here."

Ojou-sama writes letters on the blackboard. And then sits up and beckons me to sit on the bed.

While being beckoned, I move towards her.

When right next to her I feel her breath.

"Its the first time for me as well so I don't know if I can do it well…"

Ojou-sama's lips open slightly.

"I may be still inexperienced but take care of me."

She grasps my finger in her small palm.

Usually blood is sucked from the neck or arm, I guess she plans to suck it from my finger.

Ojou-sama grasps the index finger of my right hand with both her small hands and puts it in her mouth with a *glomp*.

It's warm inside her mouth.

Her tongue, like a different animal, licks my finger as if caressing it.

It seems she looks for a spot where blood can easily be sucked.

Ojou-sama's pointed teeth tears my skin open.

Maybe because of the saliva, or some other reason, there is no pain.

Ojou-sama separates my finger from her lips.

A thread of saliva which shines between lips and finger forms and extends.

It's stretching breaks off midway.

Mysteriously there is no wound on my fingertip.

All that's there is a red mark like a insect bite.

As if ojou-sama had swallowed alcohol her cheeks are flushed and her eyes appear intoxicated and become blurred.

She writes on her mini blackboard while she is unsteady as if she were drunk.

"Though it was the first time, Lute-san's blood was delicious."

"I'm happy you liked it."

Merce-san handed a handkerchief over to wipe off ojou-sama's saliva which stuck to my finger.

After bowing, as I was about to leave the room, ojou-sama pulled on my shirttail.

When I turned around, ojou-sama who still was groggy, wrote shyly on the small blackboard.

"Thanks to Lute-kun everyone could spend an enjoyable time today. Thank you for always making delicious sweets and telling enjoyable stories."

Ojou-sama gives her thanks shyly.

My facial expression turned loose from looking at her cute and enticing figure.

"Since I'm ojou-sama's butler, although I am still an apprentice, it's only the natural thing to do."

As I answered with a smile, ojou-sama also returned a smile.

A warm and happy atmosphere filled the room.

The complete change in ojou-sama's attitude compared to the first day where I began as butler was impressive.

"Well then, let me once again say: good night ojou-sama."

"Good night, Lute-san, Merce-san."

I and Merce-san bow and quietly close the room's door.

Merry-san waited for me as we exited to the hallway.

"…Ojou-sama seems to have gone to bed baa~."

He regarded my silence as confirmation.

"Then you were able to achieve the role as a blood bag?"

"Yes, thank you."

Merry said nothing and nods quietly several times.

Even if I deceive him here, he would still be able to confirm with ojou-sama tomorrow.

Telling a lie would be meaningless.

"Merce, Lute. Master and madam are waiting for you. Please follow me baa~."

Merce and I are following behind him according to his words.

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We arrived in the room where the master and his wife were waiting.

Upon entering, Head security Gigi-san awaits.

Everyone has gathered, Merry will be moderating while the meeting proceed.

“Master and madam, I would like to apologise for the trouble. The results of the 3 day examination is out and I would like to make a report baa~.”

“3 days examination? Was there such a thing?”

“Wa wa hawwa wa wa, isn’t it that. The results of the new magic lamp that appeared this time? If its performance is better than the previous one, it would be good to purchase the required amount. Haahahahahahahahaa!”

“No, you’re mistaken. It is the matter regarding whether Lute should be allowed to be the blood bag of ojou-sama whilst taking care of her or if he shall be forced to leave the Vlad family baa~.”

Both the master and madam showed faces indicating that they had forgotten about it.

Seriously, this couple…

The two remembered the conditions upon hearing Merry’s input.

Merry continued his speech.

“The conditions that master laid out was, [To act as a blood bag and allow ojou-sama to drink blood within 3 days, otherwise a refund will be requested to the slave house]. Lute has impressively completed this task baa~. Nevertheless…”

Merry cuts off.

Wait a minute! Don’t tell me that you are going to use your authority as the head butler to send me back to the slave house even though the conditions have been fulfilled!?

However, what happened was totally different from what I expected.

“Even if Lute failed to have his blood sucked, I had intended to propose for him to stay. According to Mercè’s report: Ojou-sama who has a fear of men is able to openly talk and joke; successfully led ojou-sama,

who fears sunlight and venturing out, outside and allowed her to be capable of smiling while being showered by sunlight. To let go of someone capable of such achievements would be a great loss, both for ojou-sama, and the Vlad family baa~."

Merry, no, Merry-san turned towards me and very deeply lowered his head.

"I am extremely sorry for saying terrible words like 'requesting a refund from the slave house' on the first day. I beg for your forgiveness in regards to my diatribe."

"N, Not at all! Considering the position Merry-san is in, it'd be weird if you do not object! I did not hold a grudge against you!"

"I'm really grateful if you put it that way baa~."

Master who was watching our exchange, lets out a hearty laugh.

"Hahahahahaha! Is that so! Lute has gone so far to get along with Chrisse! So for meeting the conditions Lute will be received in my Vlad family."

"Very well Lute. I look forward to the all delicious sweets Lute will make after this."

"Hahahahahahaaa! Certainly! Even if only considering the confections Lute makes, keeping him makes sense! Ahaahahahahahahaa!"

"Thank you! Master, madam!"

To my expression of gratitude, master and madam are laughing happily.

It seems I can remain in the Vlad house safely.

Merry-san's gentle expression abruptly changed and became tense.

""Well then, after this Lute will be ojou-sama's exclusive butler and blood bag. For you to become a butler suitable to the Vlad family, I will

guide you strictly baa~."

"Yes, Merry-san! I will do my best to become a splendid butler!"

The next day, an official contract marking was stamped above the provisional contract marking, using a little bit of ojou-sama's blood.

On the next day ojou-sama took a little bit of blood for the official contract marking to overwrite the provisional contract marking.

With this, I became an official member of the Vlad family and ojou-sama's exclusive apprentice butler and blood bag.

Chapter 027 – New Life

Lute, age 12.

The Demon Continent was in the exact opposite place from the Fairy Human Continent.

There were no four seasons, the weather was always cloudy.

The soil was so barren it was hard to grow crops.

By necessity, legumes that had high nutritional value and can be grown even in barren soil had become the staple crop.

Unlike the Fairy Human Continent, they only have 2 meals here: breakfast and dinner.

The food was simple, consisting of bean soup, salad, simple meat dishes, and sometimes fish.

For seasoning, it's mostly just salt.

Maybe because the Demon Races didn't have any interest in food, even the high nobles had mostly similar menus to the common rabble.

However, they poured their souls into their afternoon tea parties and nightly evening parties.

Demon Race people of all ages just love sweet snacks.

So almost all of the flour, sugar, and fruits they imported were turned into snacks. They also imported scented tea leaves in large quantities.

"Rather than baking flour into bread, make cakes!" was their national motto.

In exchange for importing flour and sugar from the Fairy Human Continent, the Demon Continent exports minerals like iron ore, coal, gold,

silver, copper, magic stones, and gems.

Their soil is barren, but to make up for that, numerous resources were buried within.

This was a land not unlike Arabia in my previous world, that was rich in petroleum.

But there were no such things as “countries” in the Demon Continent.

Whenever there was an important matter that needed to be settled, representatives from each family would meet together and decide on a course of action.

Even if they wanted to consolidate into a country, the Demon Races themselves were made up of a wider range of clans compared to other races, so it was difficult.

Mermen and birdmen can’t possibly be expected to adopt the same way of living. It was also impossible to force them into the same way of thinking and doing things.

For those reasons they could not come together as a country.

In the eyes of the other races, they were uncivilized barbarians.

There are even those who look and act similar to monsters.

Then perhaps it was inevitable that discrimination progressed into war.

About 1000 years ago, a war between the union of the Fairy, Human, and Beast races and the Demon Race broke out.

At the start, the Fairy Human Beast alliance dismissed them as disorderly mobs, but when push came to shove, the Demon Race had a higher sense of unity than they imagined.

The war finally ended in a draw, but considering the Demon Race’s high individual skill and magic power, it was possible that the Fairy Human

Beast alliance could have lost if the war dragged on.

Moreover, the Demon Continent is a country full of resources where minerals like ores, precious metals, magic stones, and gems were buried in great amounts.

They were discriminated against because their appearances were similar to monsters, but the Fairy Human Beast alliance came to know that they were a race that should not be made enemies of.

After the war, it became bad manners to treat the Demon Race with discrimination.

Because there were no countries in the Demon Continent, the title of Count Dan Gate Vlad who bought me—"Count" was given to him by a small Fairy Human Continent country together with a plot of land for his services there.

Right now that land seemed to be under the management of master's acquaintance.

Just what kind of services did he do….

Count Dan Gate Vlad was born as the third son of a vampire family head.

He couldn't hope for an inheritance.

But thanks to the magic talent he was born with, he became an A ranked magician.

Then once he graduated from magic school, master immediately registered with the Adventurers' Guild, brimming with frontier spirit, and rushed out to the Demon Continent.

He went around the world, embarking on all sorts of adventures—like slaying monsters, hunting robbers, getting into fights with dragons, destroying Legions that made an enemy of him all by himself, and exploring dangerous dungeons.

At first people around him took their distance because he was a Demon Race.

But because of his sociableness, strength, and gentlemanly conduct, the animosity that was there at the beginning was quickly blown away, and he made many friends and colleagues.

That master was going hunting for pirates when he met madam.

Mrs. Seras Gate Vlad was well known as the former female captain of a pirate-hunting ship.

She was a competent person with a B+ rank in magic.

Those two met, and immediately fell in love at first sight.

On the same day, master delivered a bracelet to madam and married her.

All their friends at the time could not keep up with their speed, and everyone was surprised.

Then the two returned to the Demon Continent, and set up a trading company.

Thanks to madam's sailing skills forged in her pirate-hunting days and Master's knowledge of language and also connections and intermediaries built with his sociable attitude, the company soon reaped huge profits.

What earned them a particularly large amount of profit was hiring Dwarves to process raw gemstones, gold, and silver in the Demon Continent and exporting them.

The company handled everything from mining the raw materials, processing, and transportation.

To that extent, it was possible for them to establish a system that can achieve high quality, implement designs the customers like, and respond to orders no matter how small.

Thanks to that they had a good reputation with their customers and orders keep coming in.

The other Demon Race people tried to copy master, but they couldn't do what he did, and caused cultural friction with the Dwarves.

They also didn't have connections to the upper crust of the Fairy Human continent like master did.

Thus they could not sell the goods even if they could make them.

If that's the case, then it doesn't matter how much they could produce.

That way, contrary to other people's struggles, master's business kept on growing rapidly.

Right now, the two were all but retired.

The business was mostly left to their subordinates, and they only came in to check every now and again.

What do they do on the days they're not at work—

Madam would throw tea parties, assembling noble wives in similar situations for all kinds of gatherings. She was a person with such tastes.

Master would be busy, earnestly training.

Generally speaking, he seemed to like building his muscles.

When I met master while working in the corridor, he would instantly take of his clothes and pose.

"Lute! What do you think of my muscles! Strapping, aren't they!"

"Y, yes. They are very strapping. I think they are very well trained."

"That so! Hahahahahahaha!"

Satisfied with my reply, he vanished behind a corner.

Then from behind the corner, the sound of Mercè-san saying “they are very strapping, magnificent” was heard, and once again master’s laughter resounded.

He didn’t have to be so loud that everyone can hear…

Also, master and madam would go on trips with just the two of them several times a month.

They looked to be intimate, cuddly trips, not unlike newlyweds.

It was everyone’s ideal slow life.

However, there were those who are jealous of master’s success and graceful days, they were the main family’s eldest and second sons, in other words, master’s older brothers.

The main family was an ancient house, they had land, and generally they were also considered the upper crust of society.

But the sum total of their assets were totally dwarfed by master’s.

It seemed that at any rate, they couldn’t stand it.

Once upon a time, the eldest and second brothers, coming up with a suitable excuse, started a war with master.

The enemy was from the vampire clan’s main house, numbering 1000 people. This includes 50 magicians.

On the other hand, the Vlad house’s fighting force, including master and madam, comes to under 50 people if you take them together.

But it ended in the Vlad house’s complete victory.

The Vlad house’s allies were madam’s former subordinates and master’s adventurer colleagues who were indebted to him. They were heads and shoulders above the main vampire house’s subordinates in terms of battle experience and loyalty.

And the most critical thing of all is master himself.

Master's A rank magician title was not just for show.

A rank magician is a title that only a handful of talented magicians can reach after much effort.

During the time of the war, master trampled down the main vampire house's subordinates, bathed in all kinds of magic, without even getting a single injury.

Yet despite this, there was not a single casualty.

It was something he can do precisely because he had overwhelming difference in power.

The eldest and second brothers immediately apologized for causing a war out of their own accord.

Master just laughed and forgave them.

Furthermore master did not demand money or anything besides an apology out of them, for one reason.

That reason is—"It was fun to have something make my muscles shake again after a long time! But I couldn't give my muscles the joy of exercise unless you had a little more spine! Hahahahaha!"

At these remarks of master's, even madam seems to have let out a strange laugh.

Not sure if it's their caliber as people, or if this couple was just a pair of huge idiots….

Master was willing to forgive and forget in good faith, but the eldest and second brothers still held a grudge from this war.

It was rumored that they were restrained from asking for a rematch by the people around them.

It was for master and madam's only child Chrisse Gate Vlad's 10th birthday that I was bought to be a blood bag and steward by mistake.

For vampires, blood was a luxury good, like coffee, tea, or tobacco.

Human blood had an especially good flavor.

The concept of birthdays doesn't exist in the Fairy Human Continent.

At best, there was only a coming of age celebration when one reaches 15 years of age.

But the Demon Continent did have the idea of birthdays.

It ends at the age of 10.

At age 15, they celebrate their joining the world of adults.

After that there were not really any birthday celebrations.

On one occasion, I asked master and madam.

Concerning ojou-sama's being hikikomori.

"Why didn't master and madam do anything to solve ojou-sama's hikikomori problem?"

It's not like they didn't do anything, that much I understood.

They bought and gifted me as a blood bag for her birthday, helping her with a chance to change for the better.

But they built a bath and toilet in her room, as if to say it's fine if she didn't come out of there, nor were they any signs of them giving her treatment to heal her trauma (though I don't know if such a thing exists in this world).

From my point of view, they seemed to have an attitude as if they didn't have an interest in ojou-sama.

That sweet, gallant ojou-sama having parents that don't care about her—I don't think that such a thing was possible, but I won't be satisfied unless I asked them.

Master and madam exchanged glances and sunk into silence.

"…. Lute, do you know of a bird called a Continental Sea Swallow?"

Madam suddenly asked me a question I didn't understand.

I shook my head.

"The Continental Sea Swallow are migratory birds, they go back and forth on the Central Sea between the Fairy Human Continent and the Demon Continent. But the Continental Sea Swallow aren't always in flight. In my pirate-hunting days, I often saw them stop on masts, resting."

Madam took a sip of scented tea.

"I think of Chrisse right now as like one of those swallows that are taking a rest. She'll take a rest for a while, then some day she'll fly again. So in that time, we give her an environment where she can rest to the fullest."

"….. Madam really believes in ojou-sama."

"No, that's not it. It's just that I have confidence in my daughter."

"Hahahahahahaha! She's my and Seras' daughter! Sooner or later, not to mention her room, she'll fly off, away from the Demon Continent!"

"Just like you and me long ago, right. It looks like she's really going to be like that. She can't fight what's in her blood."

Then the two laughed happily.

They had faith in their daughter.

「……」

"……"

I became a hikikomori back in my previous life.

Just like ojou-sama, I stayed inside, afraid of being bullied again by the world outside.

That time, my parents didn't say anything and let me shut myself inside.

Perhaps they believed in me, their son, just like master.

They believed that one day I would summon my courage and come out of the room on my own.

But in the end, I kept on staying home like that, and finally had to be thrown out by my parents.

Either go work at an acquaintance's metalworking factory, or receive 1 million and leave the house.

At the time they said that, I resented them, saying "Some parents they are! Isn't it their job to take care of the son they gave birth to!?"

But I wonder how my parents felt at that time.

I was only thinking of myself, and didn't think of how my parents felt.

At best, I sulked and said—I have a more accomplished younger brother than myself so excuse me if I don't do my job.

If I could go back to my previous life, Japan, I want to face my parents and talk to them.

Telling each other our feelings while drinking sake.

Then I want to know what they were thinking at the time, what they wanted, even if it's too late.

Then before I realized, one year had passed since the time I met with master, madam, Chrisse ojou-sama, Merry-san, Mercè-san, Gigi-san—with everyone.

Recently I've been living as Chrisse ojou-sama's guard, steward, and blood bag.

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Now that I've turned 12, my daily living schedule was like this….

The day starts by me firstly getting out of bed and changing into my butler clothes.

I would open the windows, and let the fresh morning air into my room.

There would sometimes be mice right under the window. They were good guys that would eat bad insects.

They looked totally like hamsters.

They seemed to like sweets just like any other Demon Continent creature, I would sometimes give them leftover cookies and they would happily eat them.

Like I can't help returning the crane's favor, I did it because I wanted to return the mice's favor.

Once I got out of my room, I would meet up with the demon race, hamster clan head maid Mercè-san and head towards ojou-sama's room.

We went to wake up ojou-sama who would still be sleeping.

We would knock and enter the room, but most of the time, ojou-sama would still be sleeping in her large bed even when the sun's already up.

The figure of little ojou-sama sleeping in a canopy bed where three adults could fit with room to spare was very cute.

I wanted to enjoy looking at her sleeping face like this, but I steeled my heart and woke her up.

Even being a hikikomori, it's bad for her health if her circadian rhythm gets disrupted and she became a night owl.

"Ojou-sama, it's morning already, please wake up."

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Chrisse ojou-sama would twist her body like a mayfly, turning her back towards me.

She usually wouldn't wake up even if I called out to her.

So I would open the bulky dark-screen-like curtains covering the windows.

It was cloudy as usual today, but it was bright.

About a year ago, ojou-sama was bullied and became very afraid of the outside world.

Therefore at that time the windows would be kept covered with the bulky dark-screen-like curtains, but it's not the case nowadays.

She was no longer afraid of the light.

But she still couldn't come out of the room.

She would become nauseous if she were forced to come out. At worst, she would turn pale as if she were anemic and faint.

Ojou-sama's heart was wounded with trauma to that extent.

But she managed successfully bask in the light.

We should keep this up and slowly confront and heal her mental trauma.

Luckily the family had money, and a vampire's beauty won't tarnish even if they lived a long time.

As ojou-sama became bathed in sunlight, she seemed to be dazzled by it and rub her eyes awake.

If she still doesn't wake up, Mercè-san would take drastic measures: tear her quilt off and shake her shoulders.

"Ojou-sama, good morning"

"Good morning"

"Good morning. Mercè-san, Lute-san."

It seemed like the sunlight could wake her today.

Sleepy-eyed, she wrote her morning greetings on the mini blackboard.

Once ojou-sama had woken up, Mercè-san would take her along to the bathroom inside her room.

While they get her dressed for the morning, I would go finish preparing breakfast.

On the first floor, Malcolm the chief cook from the demon lizard race has finished preparing the breakfast and is placing it on a push cart.

Good morning Malcolm-san. I have come to get ojou-sama's breakfast.

"……(Gulp)"

Among the employees, Malcolm is the most silent.

His appearance is that of a lizard walking on 2 legs with cooking clothes on and a neatly maintained cooking knife in his hand.

He has the look of a fierce bloodthirsty carnivore, but in reality he eats no meat, he's a vegetarian.

But he has a sweet tooth and it seems he is taking more pride in making sweets than ordinary food.

He came to me and politely bowed his head to learn how to make pudding, custard cream and mille crepe.

Of course I wasn't stingy and taught him all the recipes I knew.

Because of that, occasionally he shares the remaining sweets from the afternoon tea party and evening party preferentially with me.

The cooking is transported by a push cart.

I carry it to the second floor with help of the body strengthening art, moving that is heavy work.

In ojou-sama's room the cooking is lined up on a table and awaits her after finishing dressing.

While ojou-sama is having her meal, I and Mercè-san are serving her as waiters.

After the meal is finished, it's cleaning it up.

I ask other maids to aid ojou-sama while I finish my late breakfast in the employee dining room.

When breakfast is finished Mercè-san returns to ojou-sama.

I go to head butler Merry-san.

In the morning Merry-san holds a study session for demon continent language apart from butler studies.

Reading and holding ordinary conversations in the demon continent language is no problem but I'm not yet used to writing.

Also as a butler I'm still too inexperienced.

Merry-san taught me everything—from how to bow my head, footwork, speech, posture, how to carry tea, how to deliver letters, to common knowledge—so I can become a butler that won't embarrass the Vlad house.

In the afternoon, I prepared the ojou-sama's tea party.

Malcolm-san prepared the [Mille Crepe] that ojou-sama liked in high spirits.

Every once in seven days, ojou-sama's childhood friends—[Three-eyed Barnie Bloomfield] [Lamia Muir Head] and [Centaur Karen Bishop] came over to play.

On those days Malcolm-san became more psyched making the snacks.

The girls seem to often come over to play with ojou-sama who had become a hikikomori for years.

Not only Malcolm-san, but also Mercè-san, Gigi-san, Merry-san, and the other maids, at least as her servants, received them in high spirits as thanks for being ojou-sama's friends.

They seem to genuinely want to come see ojou-sama.

They happily started girls' talk during the tea parties.

The three-eyed race, Barnie Bloomfield, girlishly talked about things that interest ojou-sama, like cute accessories, interesting books, and snacks she bought from all around town.

The Lamia, Muir Head, was so voluptuous and sexy you wouldn't think she was the same age as ojou-sama.

She usually had the role of listener and being the group's mediator with the standpoint of a big sister.

Ojou-sama, too, when she had something to consult, she would stealthily go talk to Muir.

The Centaur, Karen Bishop, was everyone's target of 'affection'. She was hotblooded, a military girl who would rather go with swords than accessories.

She would often get teased by Muir, and ojou-sama and the others would happily laugh at her reaction.

Once the tea party was over, I would have combat training with the head of the guards: Demon Race, Wolf clan, Gigi-san.

He was a former slave, 10 years ago he had saved up and bought himself back from master.

He could do this because he was a strong person, a magician with B+ rank.

Normally, it was all but impossible for slaves to buy themselves back.

After buying himself back from being a slave, he stayed with master and become the head of the guards.

According to himself,

"My family died long ago. I don't have a place to come back to so I stayed here."

Currently he was working here as an employee, getting paid proper wages.

I took off my butler clothes and changed into some rough sportswear.

We went to the backyard for training.

The reason I did combat training was in order to protect ojou-sama when she needed it the most.

The training menu consists of running around the castle walls to build up strength, unarmed combat, and swordsmanship training.

For unarmed combat, I sparred with Gigi-san seriously.

For swordsmanship, I practiced swings on a wooden sword and exchanged blows with Gigi-san.

At night, I carried ojou-sama's dinner to her room.

After I finished cleaning up her dinner, I switched with the other maids and had my own dinner at the employee messroom with Mercè-san.

At the evening party, before she sleeps.

Recently, ojou-sama had taken a liking for pudding in her evening parties.

Malcolm-san put the pudding in the center of the plate, and surrounded it with fruits.

It seems that having cold pudding and warm scented tea had become a habit of hers.

I stood beside ojou-sama as her waiter and told her simple stories.

Ojou-sama delightedly listened to stories I told her from light novels, manga, and anime.

Also, every once in 20~30 days, I did my job as a blood bag.

Just before she went to bed, I would pull up a chair beside ojou-sama, roll up my sleeve and present my arm.

Ojou-sama would bring her rose-red lips to my arm, and lightly nibble my skin with her pearly-white fangs.

I felt her teeth sink into my skin—her white throat moving as ojou-sama savored my blood.

There was no pain, it actually felt ticklish.

Miraculously, when ojou-sama parted her mouth, there was no scar left.

There were various theories, but the most prominent one is [is it not not because the vampire's magic power unconsciously mixes in with their saliva and produces an effect similar to healing light magic?].

Because the scar was small, it didn't seem to be a problem even for ojou-sama who had no talent in magic.

She drank a small amount of blood.

A shot glass' worth, at most.

Once I did my duty as a blood bag, ojou-sama wrapped her small hands around my arm and stroked it to make sure there were no injuries.

Then she smiled with her cheeks red, and wrote her thanks on the mini blackboard.

My heart raced just a little bit.

Then after that, Mercè-san attended to ojou-sama and began preparing for bed.

I was dismissed from service at this point.

"Have a good night."

[Good night]

I gave my greetings to ojou-sama and retired to my room.

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I return to my room in the evening.

When I was bought and taken to the Vlad house I changed into a maid uniform in this room.

Head butler Merry-san.

Chief guard Gigi-san.

Chief cook Malcolm-san.

Head maid Mercè-san.

Normally, servants are not given a room, except those mentioned above.

Normally, you'd stay in a common room, even if you worked many years you'd only get a two-person room at best.

Despite being a newcomer, I, who got my own room, had quite the special treatment.

But the other employees weren't jealous and easily accepted that fact.

That's because I'm a human.

In the past, it came to a dispute by the difference in the races lifestyle, customs etc. there were discrimination and as a backlash to it, it developed into a war.

So for that it is impossible for them to force their lifestyle on me the human newcomer.

Through such pride and various circumstances they fussed about it and gave me a room.

Editor note: yeah whatever… Winter Blues too strong to help out here

In my room I take off my butler clothes so that they get no wrinkles and hang them on a hanger and close the wardrobe.

After I change into casual clothes I will enjoy my little free time.

Eating the snacks from the tea parties and evening parties Malcolm-san left for me, weight training, and doing image training of making the revolver and AK-47 so I don't forget the intuition of making handguns.

I also made notes using the memo, pen, and inkwell I bought with the money I got from teaching Malcolm-san snack recipes and tips I got from taking odd jobs from the other servants.

I saved up money and sent a letter to Elle-sensei to tell her I was alright. However, I asked her to somehow keep this from Snow.

If she knew about me being a butler in the Demon Continent, she'd drop out of magic school and come running.

I don't want her to throw away her talent like that.

So I wrote the letter, asking to somehow deceive her if she ever came and asked because of worry.

"*ya~wn* I should go to sleep. I've worked all day today."

Fatigue caught up to me, so I slipped into bed.

Thus ends one day.

Just like that I fell into a deep sleep.

Chapter 028 – Mock Battle

Lute, age 12.

In the afternoon, after the tea party ended, I changed my butler clothes for something more rough.

Because from the afternoon I would be doing mock battles with Gigi-san.

When I finished changing clothes, I went to the backyard.

Once I was done warming up, I did 5 laps around the estate to build up my physical strength.

After some rest, I went to have a spar with Gigi-san.

There are nearly no schools of fighting in the Demon Continent.

So even though I called it training, it's mainly just sparring, pretending we're in real combat.

At the beginning—

"Lute is too timid to injure the opponent more than necessary. Even if it's training…. no, because it's training, don't lose your way and try to knock your opponent down. Normal injuries can be healed with healing magic anyway."

I received the same warnings each time when I initially started training.

During my previous life in Japan, I lived in a world completely free from violence.

In this parallel world where I was reincarnated, I have killed demons with my revolver and AK47. But, people — those with whom I could communicate with using words, I've neither hit nor shot any.

Even though we called it practice, I still had reservations about fighting without using any safety gears such as gloves or headgear.

However, after practicing martial arts for a bit more than than a year, I grew accustomed to it and stopped hesitating.

Right now, while applying body strengthening on myself, I am repeatedly striking Gigi-san with all my might.

“Deyaa!”

“Your attacks are too crude. Anticipate the development of the battle, and chain your blows accordingly. You know… if it’s just hitting each other, then even kids could do it.”

For the second time he turns in my straight right and avoided it easily.

His left fist (jab-like punch) drilled into me causing my feet to stop, and break my stance. A side kick with his right was unleashed towards me.

I guard myself with both hands and take some distance.

Gigi-san is the guard chief of the Blood house and a B+ rank magician.

It would be right to say that it is the limit that an ordinary magician could reach.

Of course, there is always someone better. Our lord, the master, is A rank.

But compared to the me with no magic talent, and my magic quantity, it is like heaven and earth.

Having more magic power means there will be an absolute advantage in all the attributes: offensive, defensive, movement speed, reflexes, etc.

That’s to be expected because the amount of magic that can be used is different.

If I cover my whole body with magic power it would hit rock bottom immediately.

Furthermore, Gigi-san's basic athletic ability as a person from the beast race is higher than that of a human.

If I lose focus, will be knocked down in 10 seconds.

Hence what I should do first will be…….to focus magic into my eyes, to avoid critical hits.

Reflexes and kinetic vision are simultaneously raised.

Thanks to my enhanced senses, I can avoid Gigi-san's left hook by ducking.

To return the favor, I bent my knees, pushed my body up and retaliated with an uppercut.

Without even trying to dodge, Gigi-san received it with one hand.

We spared like that for hours.

Next we switched to swordsmanship training.

For swordsmanship training I seriously did practice swings and sparred like with unarmed combat.

"When it comes to unarmed combat, there are some parts where Lute shines, but you have no talent in swords. So for now just strengthen your basics and focus on defense. Blades can kill you in one shot, unlike unarmed combat."

Gigi-san says even things that were hard to say straight to the person's face.

Furthermore he does so thoroughly, without leaving room for a follow up.

But this was probably also Gigi-san's kindness.

Rather than awkwardly praising me, it would be better to resolutely identify my weak points and putting more importance on practicing my counters that would be useful in combat.

While sparring with swords Gigi-san also put me on nothing but defense.

I practiced receiving blows from the wooden sword Gigi-san wielded.

He said again and again that in real combat it was more important to not get hit rather than to hit the enemy with a sword.

If it's with a sword, then being showered with blows, even from just one, would dull one's movements.

Even if the wound is shallow, when time passes, the amount of blood loss will increase and performance of the body will drop.

Magicians could treat their wounds with recovery magic, but for normal people it would be the end.

In order to avoid that, I practice swordsmanship with a high emphasis in defensive training.

After our routine practice, we wiped our sweat off with a clean cloth.

During that time, Gigi-san also taught me a way to fight against magicians as opponents.

At the time you fight a magician you must get close and go into close quarters combat. Spells are still a threat, but its more dangerous to be a distance away and be attacked from a long distance. You will be defeated from a distance if your hands and feet can't reach.

But he adds another thing.

In case your opponent is A rank magician and above, you need to flee in any case. Don't think about fighting. Fighting is useless. It's no different

from committing suicide.

"Although I have no talent as magician, but isn't Gigi-san of B+ rank. Does that still apply?"

"Yes. A long time ago I fought against one, but I couldn't do anything with my hands and feet. A rank is the domain of a handful of geniuses. There is no chance of victory."

Gigi-san narrows his eyes as he remembers his distant past.

I can feel a hateful light glimmer in his eyes.

I regard that as my imagination and ask a question.

At any rate I can't imagine the power of A rank.

How strong are they, truly? Even if you say that there is no chance of victory, the enemy is also still a living being. Even against A rank, I feel there should be some way to deal with them.

"…It's faster to personally experience it than to receive an explanation in words. Luckily there is a rumour that an A rank magician is in the mansion. That's master."

Gigi-san comes out with Count Dan Gate Blood as a sparring partner and requests a mock battle.

The master accepted cheerfully.

"Wahahahaha! Let's see, I shall ascertain just how strong Lute is, myself!"

"Master please don't forget to go easy on him. Don't let Lute die or else ojou-sama will not speak to you for a month."

"Hahahaha! That would be surely troublesome. One month is too long."

If I die I will be treated like that?

“Lute, get ready. Just in case, if you are alive I can heal you with my recovery magic, but if you die instantly there is nothing I can do.”

“Instant death… please don’t say scary things.”

I responded peevishly to what Gigi-san laid out.

But he’s right. I focus once again.

I encompassed my body with energy

The feeling throughout my body changed.

The master takes off his coat and hands it over to Gigi-san.

As a subordinate he folds master’s clothes carefully and holds them in both hands.

“……”

Again my eyes turn towards masters body.

Not less than 2m big and muscles stuffed into it to the limit.

His dark skin feels completely like metal.

Even without the body strengthening technique he has probably enough strength to easily destroy a wall.

But if its comes to that extent, I’m not so weak as to hesitate at that.

“…since it came to that, is it ok to not hold back even if the opponent is the master?”

At those words Gigi-san looks at like a dragon who looks down on a cocky black and white rabbit before him.

No, it must have been my imagination.

Master smiles in a good mood.

“Wahahahahaha! Sure! Boys are no good if they aren’t energetic like this! Saa, come at me with all you have!”

“Yes! Here I come!”

Victory goes to the one who moves first!

While I keep saving energy in mind, my magic is already near its limit because of today’s training.

I promised to not hold back even if my opponent is my employer.

I put all my power into the first blow.

Eyesight and leg strength are strengthened.

I run like a bullet and strike with my right at a short distance.

The equivalent technique in a japanese martial art would be a direct thrust!

The master didn’t even react and he didn’t put up any resistance.

I gathered momentum in to my fist and unleashed it onto the solar plexus which is difficult to strengthen.

“!?”

My hit surely connected.

But Master didn’t stagger nor take a step back.

His expression didn’t show any pain and his smile didn’t change.

The strike to the master felt as if hitting against a thick iron plate enveloped with layers of solid and flexible rubber tire.

Instead the fist with which I hit was pained and I made an anguished

expression.

The master lifts his left arm to the height of his face.

“Fuun!”

“Tsu!?”

He swings his left arm down as if to sweep a fly away.

A single rough blow.

And yet I feel a cold shiver of fear in my back.

I cross my arms right away.

I turned to defense and put all the remaining magic power into a resistance formation.

“!!!!!!???”

When the masters arm hit my guard, my body flew like a rubber ball flipped in a pachinko.

Without rebounding, I crash into the tree about 10m to the back.

The tree breaks with a “merimeri” sound.

To avoid a fatal wound I deploy a magical resistance formation at my back the moment I crash into it

The result was that bones in both of my arms were shattered, while my right shoulder suffered multiple fractures.

“tsu–!!!”

I vomited blood as my internal organs were pierced by broken bones.

I couldn’t muster any strength while intense pain ravaged throughout my body.

I could see Gigi-san rushing towards me with an unusual expression, from the edge of my sight, as my vision fades.

“————————! ————!”

Gigi-san’s voice that reached my ears sounds so far away.

My eyelids felt as heavy as lead, and I feel as though I am falling into a bottomless pit.

As I was losing my consciousness, I finally reached an understanding of the meaning behind Gigi-san’s words.

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[I see, that is what has happened.]

The night of the day I had my mock battle with the master.

Head maid Mercè-san and me are serving as stewards at the evening party.

At the evening party, ojou-sama asked to me “Lute, do you have any idea regarding the loud commotion at the backyard?”.

As there is no reason to cover up the mock battle with master, I told her of my defeat in a single strike, with the master not using any skills.

Despite being heavily injured when I crashed into the tree trunk, ojou-sama stroked her chest when I mentioned that I was completely healed by Gigi-san’s magic.

“Even though I had heard that the master is strong, I had not expected it to that extent.”

[But for Lute-san it is incredible to face father, who is an A rank magician, head on.]

“That is because it is just practice.”

Though I do not want to fight the master a second time, not even in practice!

As expected I do not wish for ojou-sama to hear about my uncool account, I could only give an awkward smile.

Mercè-san poured into the empty cup.

The fragrance of scented tea spreads across the room.

Ojou-sama's smile from a while ago turned into an unhappy expression.

For some unknown reason, she was hesitating and wrote with restraint, on the mini blackboard.

[……Why does Lute-san work so hard to become stronger? You knew about yourself not having the talent to be a magician right?]

She seems to be hesitating about letting another person hear about my potential as a magician.

Ojou-sama was bullied as she was also without talent, resulting in her becoming a hikikomori.

It must have been hard for her to ask about the topic as it resulted in her trauma, and the topic itself is a landmine for her.

As absence of my potential as a magician did not cause any particular frustration which could lead to trauma, I told her my honest opinion without showing an unpleasant face.

Even though I certainly do not have any talent in becoming a magician, within me, I still have the desire to protect those who are important to me. Therefore I'm doing what I could, and that would be conserving my magic power by honing my swordsmanship and unarmed combat techniques.

In the past, there is a river where children played near the village I

stayed, and there, a person important to me was about to get hit during a raid by a group of goblins.

Thanks to my training, I was able to save the children and my important person without a single casualty– I omitted mentioning the handgun as it would be troublesome to explain.

Due to that past experience, I continue training even now. I worked hard so that I could protect my loved ones, should a similar situation occur.

[……]

Ojou-sama listened to my story with a serious look.

I couldn't find any negativity from her expression that could be related to 'you are a fool for aiming to be a magician despite having no potential'. Rather, her eyes seem to be shining in admiration and respect.

Ojou-sama wrote on her mini blackboard.

[That is such a splendid way of thinking. Lute is such an amazing person.]

"……That is not it, I only did what I could do."

Ojou-sama started writing again.

"If it is not a bother……Tomorrow, may I observe your training from the window?"

Not only me, Mercè-san was also surprised at her proposal.

Taking my attitude as a denial, ojou-sama's eyebrows drooped, showing a sad expression and wrote on the mini blackboard.

[Am I not allowed?]

"N, No that is absolutely not the case. As such, I will notify Gigi-san that tomorrow's training will be at the courtyard which could be viewed from this window."

[If you would, please. I will be looking forward to it very much♪]

Her mood changed for the better as she delightedly placed pudding into her mouth.

Mercè-san quietly wiped her eyes so as not to be noticed by ojou-sama.

For ojou-sama who is afraid to even venture out of the room, to look at the training from the window…… To say that she wants to look outside.

What a great improvement that is.

For Mercè-san, an old-timer who has been by ojou-sama's side since she was born, she would be very happy at the tiniest improvement.

After the evening party had ended, I implored Gigi-san for the training to absolutely be held at the courtyard. He is also one to adore ojou-sama……the Vlad house.

I think he would gladly raise both hands in agreement.

A smile floated on my face as my mouth loosened from imagining Gigi-san's happy expression.

Ojou-sama tilted her head when she noticed, but I deceived her appropriately.

Chapter 029 – Onii-chan

"…..How did this happen."

I muttered in a soft voice so that no one could hear.

I placed both hands on my face in denial.

I mustered my courage and removed my hands to face reality….. Master is doing shadow boxing with nimble footwork despite his gigantic figure.

With all clothing removed from his upper body, sunlight could be seen reflected from his muscles, as though they were made of metal.

Between master and me stood Gigi-san who would be acting as referee.

On one end of the courtyard, a white table and 2 chairs were placed under a parasol. The madam sat in one of the chairs, while savoring scented tea that was brewed by Mercè-san.

On the table is a fruit pudding, a masterpiece made by Malcolm-san, to complement the tea.

She's completely in spectator mode.

Furthermore, shifting my gaze upwards, ojou-sama could be seen looking down unto the courtyard from the window.

(Just because of what I said last night……)

I was once again hit with pangs of regret.

Last night, I invited Gigi-san to my room after the evening party had ended.

I wanted to let him know that ojou-sama held interest in observing our

training session.

Upon hearing the news, Gigi-san……

“Ojou-sama, observing……~tsu”

He covered his eyes with one hand and turned his back on me.

In the instant he turned his back, was it just my imagination or was there something shining in his eyes.

Gigi-san continued the conversation with his back facing me.

“Alright. In that case, the training tomorrow will be done in the courtyard which is visible from ojou-sama’s room. Be there without fail.”

“Understood.”

“It will be performed in ojou-sama’s presence tomorrow. I intend to carry out training that’s more fired up than it has been until now. Prepare yourself.”

After telling me that, Gigi-san returned to his room.

This is the first time I heard his voice so full of spirit.

To a large extent, he must have been happy that ojou-sama would be looking outside, even if it’s just from her window.

I shall work hard to make myself even a little more useful; I once again strengthened my resolve.

However, Gigi-san……was more fired up than I had imagined.

“Now then, we will now conduct a mock battle between master and Lute.”

As a result of Gigi-san being too fired up, he once again decided to conduct a mock battle against the master as my special training.

With the [Me vs. Master] mock battle as a trigger, ojou-sama started taking an interest in my special training. That's why, in order to secure her interest, Gigi-san arranged this encore revenge match.

Of course, it……was not done out of any consideration to me.

As I remembered the fear from yesterday, my legs trembled like a newborn goat, as if they had been injected with muscle relaxant.

There on one side is the master and company……

"Darling, do your best. Do not forget to go easy though. If darling fights Lute seriously, it would be weird if there are any remains left."

"Hahahahaha! Don't worry, despite how I may seem, I am quite good at controlling my strength. As proof, Lute is still full of energy after yesterday's mock battle!"

"Hmm, that's true. His contained spirit could be seen from his trembling action. What a reliable child he is."

That's not it, madam.

What you see is not a warrior's trembling in excitement, but uncontrollable trembling out of fear.

Should I just hide myself until the evening?

Ever since the master had officially purchased me, the magic prevention choker was removed for the sake of my training.

After the purchase, it is on the owner's discretion whether the choker would be kept on, and so it was removed.

The possibility to escape still exists.

However, there is a magic formation in my arm that is set to allow my owner to pinpoint my location (In my case, that would be Chrisse ojou-sama).

I might get sold to another place from the bad impression, if I were to try to escape.

But, I should be forgiven if I were to hide until the evening, to avoid the mock battle with master……

Turning my gaze to my current owner, ojou-sama……

[Father, Lute-san, both of you please do your best. I shall cheer for you!]

The mini black board sent words of encouragement from the window.

I closed my eyes in embarrassment, while a small hand could be seen waving shyly.

Damn! Such cuteness AaAargghhhh!

I returned her wave with a smile.

As a man, Lute must not run away!

Gigi-san raised his voice when explaining the rules so that ojou-sama could also hear him.

"Then, the mock battle between master and Lute shall begin soon. It will be Lute's victory if he can withstand the master's attack for 10 seconds. Of course, other than evasion, attacks are also allowed. Master wins if Lute is defeated within 10 seconds. Is that alright with both of you?"

"Humu."

"……Yes."

After hearing our reply, Gigi-san headed to the side where the madam was at.

He raised his right hand up high, and glanced back at us again.

“And so, mock battle……Begin!”

With Gigi-san’s signal, I flew backwards.

I used body strengthening magic on my eyes and legs at the same time, this is done to especially put emphasis on evasion.

With this, I should be able to hang on for 10 seconds……however, I was too naive.

“!?”

Before I noticed, master was there right in front of me, his right hand was swinging towards me.

Even though I had strengthened my reflexes, I couldn’t react in time. Like the image of a film being suddenly cut off, he was already in front of me.

“OooooooooO!”

I gave out a war cry that sounds like a scream as I dodged the right straight with a side step!

Master’s side is open after his punch missed. Chance. Should I attack?

Master’s eyes are shut.

Impossible!

If I don’t increase the distance!

Where should I flee? To the back, right, left, or should I add an element of surprise and go upwards?

With the single desire to increase the distance with master, I poured all my magic into my legs and flew backwards.

However, I lost sight of master’s figure again.

“!?”

When I noticed, a large shadow was blocking out the sunlight from behind me.

I burst into cold sweat.

My instincts envisioned my death.

That was all I could remember.

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“It’s impossible, impossible, impossible. To continue evading for 10 seconds with the master as an opponent. The master’s strength is on the level where it could be called a cheat.”

That day, I complained incessantly while doing my duty of waiting on ojou-sama with Mercè-san, at the evening party.

In the end, I was knocked out by the master in a single hit from behind.

I was defeated in the span of 3 seconds.

Although I was healed with healing magic, the second half of my training, which was supposed to be in swordsmanship, was cancelled just to be sure.

I was told to rest until evening.

When it is time for the evening party, I went to serve ojou-sama with Mercè-san.

The topic of conversation is of the mock battle this afternoon.

[But to last 3 seconds with father as an opponent is amazing.]

“Thank you very much. However, being barely able to avoid…… Honestly, it is so embarrassing. Moreover, to have special training

everyday until I can evade for more than 10 seconds. Gigi-san is being too unreasonable."

Drooping her shoulder, ojou-sama looks flustered.

She looks so cute.

She wrote on the mini blackboard.

[How about closing the distance rather than increasing it next time? If you could deal with father's feints calmly, I think you would surely be able to persevere for 10 seconds.]

"Was there a feint used?"

[Yes. After the first strike, he used a feint causing Lute-san to escape backwards, so that he could give pursuit.]

In other words, I thought that I was acting on my thoughts, but in reality it was all within master's grasp.

(That is like herding fish.)

Master seemed to be able to pull off those extreme reactions because he knew of the actions I will take.

"However, ojou-sama has good judgement. Without even using magic," I blurted out and frantically shut my mouth.

I am not sensitive enough and threaded onto her trauma.

"?"

Ojou-sama tilted her head.

To smooth over the words I blurted out, I hurriedly requested more advice to improve my condition.

"Is, is there any other advice? With ojou-sama's input, I might be able to break through the 10 second barrier. If there is anything that you noticed,

I'd appreciate it if you let me know."

I do not distrust ojou-sama, I am willing to accept any guidance in order to fix the flaws that are observed in me.

In close range combat that is almost to the point of touching each other – arm's length – bulging muscles from training will make it hard to throw fast punches.

There is certainly great worth in attempting close range combat.

I was also taught of the master's minor habits.

Thus, the evening party turned into a location for the strategy meeting for the fight against the count tomorrow.

After that, I invited Gigi-san to my room just like last night, to inform him that ojou-sama will be observing tomorrow's fight again. Incidentally, I also wanted to try asking a doubt that has been bugging me.

How could ojou-sama, who couldn't even cast magic to strengthen her body, be able to keep track of the master's smallest movements which even I couldn't do.

Gigi-san was amazed as he explained.

"The vampire race not only has night vision, but also good eyesight and kinetic vision. Ojou-sama's eyes seems to be exceptional even amongst them, the madam did explain that on the first day Lute arrived, didn't she."

I had forgotten about it.

But, that should not be a level that could be described just with 'good eyes'……

To be capable of capturing the master's every action without the aid of magic, from her bedroom window on the 2nd storey.

"Ojou-sama's eyes are more outstanding than Lute can ever imagine."

Gigi-san folded his arms while reminiscing the past.

He recounted……

Before ojou-sama became a hikikomori, she came came across the nest of Giant Bats in the forest behind the castle.

Giant bats are 2 meters large, enormous bats that could suck dry the blood of livestock, children, and adults.

The forest is situated around 1 kilometer away from the castle.

Master decided for their extermination after judging them to be dangerous.

At night, they waited for the giant bats to gather at their nest so that they could be eliminated in one fell swoop.

The master and madam stopped their smiles as they observed their surroundings, and proceeded on to the extermination.

They had taken 2 of their subordinates into the forest.

Head of security, Gigi-san was left at the castle as a precaution.

The giant bats would undoubtedly lose to master and madam, and a deafening roar that would shake anyone to the core resounded.

It was the sound that marks their victory.

But unfortunately, a single giant bat managed to escape.

It flee in the direction of the castle.

Although Gigi-san tried to defeat it with magic……

The giant bat swooped down at the plains between the forest and castle.

The giant bat was blazing towards ojou-sama.

Out of nowhere, she took out bow and arrows, and in that windy night, her single arrow pierced through the giant bat that had blended into the darkness of the night sky.

She even managed to accurately shoot through it's eye socket which was only about 5 cm in size.

The forehead of the giant bat is very tough and arrows were unable to pierce through it.

Therefore, even though it is common sense for bow users to shoot the eyes, for a child to accurately shoot her arrow without mistake, is reason enough to cause anyone to shudder at such an impossible feat.

"As I stood in front of the giant bat's carcass that was shot, I was convinced. If Chrisse ojou-sama had potential as a magician, she would have dwarfed even her parents' already outstanding talent."

Gigi-san hung his head solemnly.

But, he soon raised his head.

"Sorry, please forget that last part…… Anyway, ojou-sama has grown to look forward to observing the training session. This is a once in a lifetime chance. Lute has to break through the 10 second hurdle with ojou-sama's advice during training tomorrow. In that way, we can create an opportunity for ojou-sama to renew her confidence by letting her taste a sense of achievement from completing this pseudo-goal. It is a very heavy responsibility."

"Then please advise the master to go easy on me during the mock battle."

I spoke in such a tone to Gigi-san who had placed additional needless pressure on me.

However, Gigi-san dismissed it with a "In that case, it wouldn't be training anymore."

Whew. Really, that is such an exhausting exchange.

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The next day, afternoon.

Another martial training……The count arrived when it is time for the mock battle.

Just like yesterday, master is half-naked while doing shadow boxing.

Under a parasol, madam is sitting on a chair by a white table, while savoring scented tea brewed by Mercè-san. The desert that came with the tea today is [Seasonal Fruits Filled Mille Crêpe].

Madam is carefreely drinking her tea as her unspirited cheer goes “Darling, Lute, each of you do your best”.

Ojou-sama’s eyes are shining brightly as she looked here from the window of her 2nd storey bedroom.

The cheers for me can be seen, written in large font, on the mini blackboard.

Gigi-san stood between master and me, and confirms the rules.

“The conditions are the same as yesterday. Lute wins if he perseveres from master’s attack for 10 seconds. Master wins if Lute is defeated in 10 seconds. Is that acceptable to the both of you?”

Both of us gave our replies of confirmation.

It is the same as yesterday up to now.

Why did master request a handshake before the mock combat.

“Hahahaha! Entertain me today, too, Lute!”

“L,Like wise please be benevolent to me.”

Master did not release my hands immediately after the handshake, and told me softly with a suppressed tone.

“I have heard from Gigi. The plan to help Chrisse regain self confidence by having her cooperate and have a pseudo feeling of having completed her objective.”

“The plan is strongly pushed by Gigi-san, although it is not known whether ojou-sama will be able to successfully regain her confidence even if we successfully complete it.. Perhaps, would it be possible if I am given a little more breathing room in today’s battle simulation?”

“Fufufu, that is not happening. That is because I enjoy having a battle simulation with Lute. I always take things that are entertaining, seriously.”

Of course. Even though I knew it.

Can’t I hold onto a sliver of hope.

After breaking the handshake with master, I went back to the starting position.

Gigi-san sat beside madam who is drinking tea.

I directed my line of sight to ojou-sama who is watching over here, at me, from the 2nd storey bedroom window.

Her eyes are shut.

She wore a nervous expression with her hand clasped on her chest.

……A cute girl is devising tactics until late night. I need to be resolute here, or else I’m a failure as a man.

Facing towards ojou-sama, I clenched my right hand into a fist and pumped it into the air.

Ojou-sama’s white cheeks blushed red.

We nodded to each other silently.

If all goes according to the plan set by ojou-sama, it will be possible to obtain 10 seconds from master, the A rank magician.

I took a long deep breath to circulate the air in my lungs and glared at the overwhelming wall-of-flesh-like master in front of my eyes.

Gigi-san raised his right hand up high.

“Hence, let the battle simulation……BEGIN!”

“UoOOOOO!!!”

“!?”

In contrast to yesterday, I charged straight up towards master.

Of course magic is injected to strengthen my eyes and legs.

It seemed that master did not anticipate such an action and only managed to dish out a half-baked right straight.

The reaction was captured by my enhanced kinetic vision.

I lowered my stance to evade!

Without stopping I continue to close the distance, then I strengthened my right arm and planted a punch into master’s abdomen.

“Kuh!”

My fist hurts when it hit the abdominal muscles that are as if they were made from a metal plate layered with rubber.

Master wasn’t fazed by an attack of this extent, and raised his left arm to catch the advancing me.

Compared to yesterday, his attacks were much slower.

As ojou-sama had said, his long arms and well developed, bulging

muscles are a hindrance in close combat that is on the verge of touching each other, causing his movements to dull.

(If it's like this, I could dodge it completely!)

To hit the persistent me, master swung his left fist down before doing a backhand attack upwards.

I had sidestepped to evade the fist before it had reached.

"Huh!"

I felt a chill on my back.

Master shot me a piercing gaze, my body was filled with pressure. His left hand gave pursuit from above.

Even at this frightening distance, I am able to notice feints of this extent by discerning how much power is exerted into master's attack.

I am impressed with how good the movement of the feint is.

I ignored my body's orders to retreat backwards.

Sound came from my molars as I clench my teeth, I stopped moving as I failed to suppress it.

Master noticed my inability to move and switched onto the attack.

A left hook was swung to me who was circling around by sidestepping.

I bent my spine as the punch passed through in a close shave.

"Whoops!"

It was a hook thrown from an unreasonable stance and master's body staggered.

Chance!

Again concentrate magic power on my right arm!

I gave my all into the right straight and swung it in……but, there in my sight is ojou-sama shaking her head! Why!?

Master gave me the answer to that.

He with nimble movement, he parried my straight punch with his left hand.

It is a technique called “parrying” in boxing.

His body staggering is a trick, and I had totally walked into master’s trap! Ojou-sama noticed it early and shook her head.

It is too late to regret now.

After having my punch knocked off, this time it is my body’s turn to stagger.

In a flash, master’s hard fist assaulted me in the form of a right hook.

The sound of wind being pierced is not entirely different from those of a bullet.

There is no time to cast body strengthening magic to aid my head.

The future scene of my head being cleanly severed from the rest of the body in less than 1 second, floated into my mind.

“Stop right there!”

At the same time as Gigi-san’s voice rang out, Master’s right hook stopped.

The distance of the punch to my face is not even 10 cm.

“As 10 seconds had transpired, the winner of this simulation battle goes to Lute.”

"……Hu,hurrraaAAaayyyyy!!!"

A very narrow win!

I unintentionally let out a cry of victory.

Master shook his head in disappointment, and I shifted my line of sight onto madam. She was smiling as she looked at the scene.

Then I left them alone and voiced out to ojou-sama who was observing from the 2nd storey window.

I pumped both hands into the air and joyfully sent her words of gratitude.

"Ojou-sama! I did it! I managed to last 10 seconds against master! This is all thanks to ojou-sama!"

Compared to earlier, ojou-sama's cheek had blushed and her eyes are moist, she clapped her hands vigorously, as if her life depended on it, while her body leaned out from the window so much that it seemed as if she might fall over.

In response to her clapping, I pumped my hands into the air continuously.

Both ojou-sama and me are being bound with a sense of accomplishment.

Just how long did we stare at each other.

It was probably just for a few seconds.

After I recovered my sense of reason, it is extremely rude to openly express my joy so excessively over the defeat of my master.

Moreover, for a servant and the daughter to stare at each other.

I hurriedly apologise after noticing my mistake.

“I, I’m sorry! I apologise for merrymaking!”

“Hahahaha! Never mind! It is the privilege of the victor!”

“Indeed, there is no reason to worry. Actually you should puff your chest out more. You became able to survive 10 seconds in just one day, that’s a significant improvement.”

“No, It’s all because of what ojou-sama pointed out. I did no more than move according to her advice.”

I used this chance to increase the hikikomori ojousama’s share value.

“You don’t need to be so humble. It’s hard even for a B- rank magician to hold out against Master’s attack for 10 seconds. Lute-kun should be more proud like Madam said.”

“Gigi-san……”

Gigi-san, who put me through this ordeal, patted my shoulders and praised me.

Unusually for him, his expression loosened and he made a smile.

Tears spontaneously collected on my eyes……but Gigi-san himself ruined that moving moment.

“Next you will have special training to be able to take 20 seconds of Master’s attacks.”

“Ha, haaaa!? Wha! What do you mean!? O, ouuuuch! Gigi-san’s fingers are digging into me! You’re putting too much power!”

As I raised my head, I saw Gigi-san’s eyes filled with definite bloodthirst.

“Lute…. You should know this already, but in the end you’re just a servant. Keep your attitude in accordance with your position. Understood?”

Even though both parents are okay with it, why is Gigi-san so angry!

Well he *has* been watching over ojou-sama since she was a baby, so he might think of her like his own daughter…. but still, a rematch against master is too much! It's abuse of authority!

An ogre! A demon! Gigi-san!

I called him all the names I can think of in my heart.

But of course, Gigi-san did not take back his decision.

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The evening party that night.

Mercè-san and I were being waiters, as always.

The teacakes for the evening party was an assorted fruits platter.

The head chef Malcolm-san took an apple-looking fruit and cut it into a rabbit shape like I taught him.

Ojou-sama smiled delightfully at such a cute thing.

The evening party's topic of talk was of course about the mock battle I cleared with ojou-sama's help.

"Thanks to ojou-sama's advice, I could somehow endure Master's fierce attacks. Please allow me to thank you once again."

[I didn't do anything. It's because Lute-san worked hard. Lute-san looked really cool today.]

Ojou-sama bashfully took her mini blackboard in front of her.

But it was obviously the result of ojou-sama's advice.

If it were just me alone, I would have been crushed again without being able to retaliate against Master today.

In order to boost ojou-sama's self-confidence, I gave her counsel.

"No, It was really thanks to ojou-sama. If it weren't for ojou-sama, I would have been defeated again today. It was all thanks to ojou-sama that I could win today."

[No, it was Lute-san's hard work. Even without me you could settle things on your own.]

"That couldn't be so. It was thanks to ojou-sama."

[It was Lute-san's hard work!]

"It was ojou-sama"

[It was Lute-san's work!]

"It was ojou-sama already!"

Pfft——Both of us broke into laughter.

Ojou-sama shyly laughed while hiding from behind her mini blackboard.

I put on an awkward smile.

Ojou-sama ran her fingers.

[Then, how about calling today both our victory?

"Yes, it was both our victory"

Again we confirmed our compromise and once again smiled at each other.

Ojou-sama seemed to be in a good mood, and started writing with her cheeks dyed red.

[Actually, I always wanted to have an [onii-chan]… if it isn't too

much trouble… can I call Lute-san [Onii-chan]?]

As she said that to me, I took a glance at Mercè. …. She didn't seem especially opposed to that. Maybe it was something like "It's okay if it's for healing ojou-sama's hikikomori."

"You are of course welcome to. Nobody would oppose getting such a cute little sister like ojou-sama. But, since we have our statuses to worry about, please try to not do it in front of people if you can."

[Thank you very much! Lute-onii-chan.]

C, cuteeeeeee!

A golden-haired, loli, imouto-character I want to protect!

Truly a girl that triggers my protective instinct!

"Lute-kun!"

Suddenly, Snow's words played back inside my head.

No no no, this is different.

Just a little sister! It's only love for a foster sister's cuteness.

I definitely did not mean *that* .

[Is there anything wrong, Lute-onii-chan?]

"N, not at all. I'm sorry."

I put on a fake smile to sweep away ojou-sama's worry.

It was a little scary how Mercè-san was silently watching us.

Chapter 030 – Birthday Planning

"Well then, Ojou-sama. Shall we go out?"

"…tsu"

I called out to the Ojou-sama clinging onto my left arm.

While trembling like a small animal in her outdoor outfit, she nodded nervously.

Because of bullying, Chrisse-ojou-sama became a hikikomori.

Afraid of the outside, for approximately 2 years, she never left her room.

However today at last, little by little, she's trying to go outside her room.

[If it is with Lute-oniichan, I think I will be able to get out of my room] is what Ojou-sama had said.

Grasping my hand tightly like Ojou-sama declared, getting out of the room together with me, we walked slowly down the corridor.

Our destination is the courtyard.

The place where I usually train at.

In the courtyard; Master, Madam, Gigi-san, and the maid Mercè-san, were waiting.

Noticing us, Master and Madam nonchalantly called out to us.

"Welcome. Today's snack is biscuits. We have seconds, so eat to your heart's content."

"Hahahahaha! If you don't exercise after you eat, you'll become fat!"

“Dear, even if she is your daughter, telling a girl that she’ll grow fat is bad. Besides, Chrisse is too thin, I’d rather she have some meat on her.”

Master had already shed his coat, warming up his body with something like shadow boxing.

Madam is sitting under the parasol while drinking the scented tea that Mercè-san had made.

Today’s teacakes are biscuits

Malcolm-san’s handmade custard cream is put inside a small jar.

It seems like, they like to spread the custard cream on their biscuits before eating it.

The teacakes look like they would give you heartburn.

Gigi-san seized his eyes with a hand, casting his head down.

Even though her parents’ and Mercè-san’s attitudes were no different than usual, the sight of them being moved by their only daughter coming out of her room was a scary one to see.

As I set Ojou-sama down on a separate seat from Madam, she slowly let go of my hand.

“Well then, I’ll be letting you go now Ojou-sama. Everyone who is watching, your cooperation will be much appreciated.”

[I’ll do my best. Please take care of yourself too, Lute-oniichan.]

“Thank you very much.”

While turning my shoulder, I stood before Master.

Like usual (today as well), I have combat training in the afternoon.

I somehow cleared the challenge of lasting 20 seconds against Master

in a mock battle.

The next task from Gigi-san is to “even if it’s a little to injure master or to push him back”, it’s something like this…

In short it is from complete defence training to defence including attack training.

However, this is harder than I thought.

First, even if I get a hit on Master it won’t even leave a millimeter sized scratch on his skin, and even if I try to attack him he will just dodge me with his footwork.

and no matter how I attack him, it doesn’t daunt him at all, let alone make him stumble.

Ojou-sama also felt that there was a limit to observing and looking for weaknesses through a window from a distance, so the the reason for her going down to the courtyard was to see the mock battle better.

Gigi-san intended to use the strategy: to recover ojou-sama’s confidence by clearing different objectives for a single purpose.

Till now it had great results, finally, after 2 years, ojou-sama was able to go outside.

However, it’s not over yet.

For the plan to succeed, and for Ojou-sama’s determination, today I will leave a wound or force Master to stumble a step.

“YOSHI!!!!!!”

I slap my cheeks with a yell to bring up my spirit.

“Hahahahahhahahaha! Today’s Lute has more fighting spirits than before!”

“Of course!” Today I will show you that I can follow your footwork!”

“Umu! Try as much as you want! If it’s the truth, I myself must do my best! Hahahahahahaha!”

You won’t be able to take on that composed attitude for much longer.

Together with Ojou-sama, I came up with a secret plan last night.

I turn my gaze towards ojou-sama who was sitting on a chair.

“……”

We nodded to each other in affirmation.

“W, Well then, let’s carry out the mock battle between Master and Lute.”

Gigi-san places his eyes on ojou-sama, then turns back to madam and raises his arm.

…… no more, recover from being deeply moved, already.

“Dear, please don’t be too fired up.”

[Lute-oniichan, give your best!]

There were cheers from the girls’ camp.

While holding his eyes Gigi-san swings down his arm.

That’s why, I wish he would stop crying already. With a scary face isn’t he crying a bit too much.

“Well then, SHAM BATTLE—BEGIN!”

As the signal was raised, I raised the abilities of my eyes and feet with body strengthening arts.

I leap to the left side.

However, Master matched up with me just like a mirror—But this is all going just as planned!

I believed in the fact that Master would definitely adhere to his super reaction-time, as soon as my feet hit the ground — I leapt to the right.

Master's center of gravity fell forward to throw a right-handed strike; but he was one beat too late for me who had immediately moved to dodge.

In that short instant, I went around and cut in from the right side.

"Fuu!"

With his left hand, Master throws a backhand chop.

I crouch to avoid it.

I go lower and lower to the ground in order to go around to his back.

Master couldn't hold it in and turned around without considering his defence.

Like planned—— my opponent has confident in his toughness. So his consideration to defence is low.

I will take that as my advantage!

As discussed in advance concentrate my magic in both legs.

At the same time as master turns around, I jump with my whole body at him with my right fist clenched so hard it hurt.

It's my only chance.

"Deyaaa!"

In ojou-sama's past meeting I was to grasp master chin with my right fist!

Of course I collected magic in my right hand and a small resistance

formation was formed to protect my fist.

Because master is tall he can't look back to find me who has lowered himself and find me immediately. Furthermore because his wariness was weakened I was able to hit his chin with my fist.

Since master has a head too, if I punch his chin his brain will sway and he will go down.

That is inevitable for living things.

The problem is—— that master may be tougher than imagined.

"Ha?"

My fist struck a blow as clean as could be. In spite of that, there was no effect other than a few blood vessels on Master's neck tensing. His chin didn't even budge a millimetre.

"Fun!"

"Guha!?"

Master swings his arm like to dust off a small insect in a flash.

I blew away to the opposite side of where Madam and Ojou-sama sat; crashed into a wall – destroying it, and finally stopped.

Of course, my consciousness left me then.

Today too, I have suffered a crushing defeat by master.

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"Master is too strong, it's impossible to accomplish this special training? I came to think that recently."

[I have the same opinion. Though it's my father it's far too abnormal.]

The reflection on today is done during the afternoon tea party.

Lately Ojou-sama wishes that I only serve as a waiter.

As one would expect, Merce-san dresses her in the mornings.

“Ojou-sama looked from close up and noticed something?”

[Yes, a little. The first thing I gathered, is that father’s offense is unusually weak.]

“Weak?”

The words on the mini blackboard are erased and written anew.

[Because there is a height difference to Lute-oniichan, he needed to stoop in his attack. At that time you should force yourself as much as possible. His center of gravity slants ahead too much. If you strike at that moment ——]

Indeed, if I were to attack with a shoulder throw at that moment, striking the ground may be able to at least disrupt his breathing.

“”“……..””

Ojou-sama and I both fell silent and imagined it.

Dammit. No matter what, I can’t envision a scenario where it happens.

Ojou-sama seems to have the same thought and we give each other a bitter smile.

Our side’s attacks have no effect. Yet, the opponent holds enough power that a single strike leaves us helpless. This puzzle is getting tougher by the minute — even a stalemate would be good.

“If I had an AK47 or something of the sort, I think I could put a scratch on him if I shoot all bullets at point blank at him.”

[AK47?]

Dammit my thoughts slipt out.

Ojou-sama tilted her head lovely and showed me her mini blackboard.

When I think about it a little, there is no particular problem to speaking about it.

“An AK-47 is a magic tool that shoots little pieces of metal a long distance using explosion magic against opponents to kill and wound them.”

[It’s the first time I hear of such a magic tool. It’s a quite interesting magic tool. I want to see one sometime.]

“Does ojou-sama have an interest in magic tools?”

Ojou-sama looked down uncomfortably.

[Given that I don’t have talent as a magician, there was a time when I studied various things in order to get a job that was related to magic, even if just a little bit…]

Therefore her interest surged when she heard about the AK-47 which is a type of magic tool she’s never heard of, and she informed me as such with tiny characters at the end.

The atmosphere in the room darkens.

Just then Ojou-sama drank the last of her scented tea.

“…..Barnie-sama and Muir-sama will come tomorrow. This shall be it for this meeting, it would be better to get to sleep already.”

[That’s right. I have important things to tell them tomorrow, so I’ll go to sleep now.]

The atmosphere around Ojou-sama brightens and smile is on her face as she showed her mini-blackboard.

I have to exchange words in a tone as bright as possible with her.

I help prepare Ojou-sama to sleep

She goes into the bed and extinguishes the lamp.

“Then, good night, Ojou-sama.”

The room goes dark and I can’t see the mini-blackboard anymore.

Instead Ojou-sama waves with her small hand.

I bow with a smile on my face and leave her room behind.

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On the next day, a tea party was held in Ojou-sama’s room.

In the room her two childhood friends, Barnie Bloomfield of the three eyed race and Muir Head of the Lamia race, were sitting

Besides me there was also Merce-san, in charge of serving.

On todays meeting the Centaur Karen Bishop wasn’t at the gathering, but that doesn’t particularly mean that the friend was left out.

The Lamia Muir puts her cup of scented tea down and begins talking.

“Well then, we better get started preparing Karen’s birthday party.”

The demon race has the custom to celebrate one’s birthday until 15, like in Japan in my previous life

So today’s gathering was to arrange for Karen’s surprise birthday party.

Hence, except for her those two gathered at ojou-sama’s room.

The three-eyed Barnie counts on her fingers.

“So we’ll be deciding the birthday presents, the venue for the party, the food, and the decorations, right?”

“Well, I think that’s probably it. I wanted to use this room for the venue, is it alright?”

Muir asked that question to Chrisse-ojousama and she shows the mini blackboard powerfully.

[Then let’s use our house’s banquet hall. My side can do all the preparations for the food and the decorations]

“B, But the banquet hall is….”

Three-eyed Barnie’s expression became gloomy.

Ojou-sama had a slight wry smile while apologizing.

[I’m sorry to worry you for so long. I’ve come to be able to go out of the room so I’ll be alright]

“I, Is that so! What a relief! That’s great Chrisse-chan!”

Ojou-sama and Bunny, who seem to be on the same wavelength, clasped their hands together in joy

On the other hand, the mature Muir looks at me while flickering her red tongue.

She smiled as if having understood something.

“I see … as I expected there’s only one reason for a girl to change.”

I understand the meaning of those words somehow, but it is entirely wrong.

That’s an extreme misunderstanding.

For Ojou-sama’s honor too I want to clear this misunderstanding, but it’s not the place for a servant to speak out as they please without permission

Muir put on a coy smile as if to say “I can see everything”.

I said it’s a misunderstanding already!

“Well then, I’ll take up Chrisse-san’s offer to use her house’s banquet hall, my side will be preparing the food. I don’t feel it’s right to impose everything on you.”

“Yup yup! If there’s anything the two of us can bring from our homes let’s bring it out quickly!”

[Then let’s bring together stuff from our three houses. That way everything can be finished with only a third of the work]

Ojousama took everyone’s opinion into account and thought up a plan

The other 2 people raised their voice in approval immediately.

“Now then, the presents. Let’s give an outline of what we’ll probably be getting her so we don’t accidentally give her the same thing on the day. Anyway, I’ve prepared some cute clothes that would suit Karen”

“Mou Muir-chan is a meany. Karen-chan’s face will be absolutely flustered. She will say “Such frilly clothes will not look good on me! Are you bullying me!” like that.”

[She’ll definitely say that]

Ojousama wryly smiled at Barnie’s imitation of Karen

“I intend to get a saving box. And you Chrisse-chan?”

[I haven’t decided yet…]

“Her birthday is next week so there is still time left, so take your time and decide on a good one.”

“That’s right, you don’t need to worry about getting the same present so long as you look for something other than clothes or a money box”

The lamia Muir gives me a fleeting wink.

“If you can go out of your room now, how about going out to the town to search for a birthday present? I think you find something better by going around and see various things than to think alone in a room.”

[In town?]

She had only left her room once

I think going to town so soon would be overdoing it

But ojou-sama clenches her fist with a “gyu”.

[That’s right. For Karen-chan’s sake I will try going out to town and look for one]

“Uh-huh, that would be good”

“Hang in there Chrisse-chan”

Encouraged by 2 people, ojou-sama becomes determined.

If Gigi-san gets to know that Ojou-sama is leaving to go shopping in the town, he will at least hold his face for 3 hours.

While I was thinking that, ojousama looks at me with an upward glance.

Nervous and embarrassed, she held out her mini blackboard

[That being the case I want Lute-oniisan to accompany me to town… is that OK?]

“Of course, ojousama. If it’s alright with you please let me carry the packages.”

Seeing our exchange, Barnie was in pure delight seeing her friend’s recovery. Muir, on the other hand, looked at me suggestively

“I said what you’re thinking is not happening already!”, I replied with my gaze

Chapter 031 – Shopping

The morning three days after the meeting about Karen's surprise birthday, ojou-sama boarded the carriage in outdoor wear.

Her face was obscured by a hat in which her was hair stuffed into and she wears a one piece dress that is made from a silk-like material. The hem of the dress and the sleeves are long in length, to minimize skin exposure to the utmost. It's a low profile disguise style.

I sit next to her in my butler uniform, gently holding her hand.

The carriage was a six-seater

The windows are behind curtains that block the light.

The faint daylight shines through it.

The escort Gigi-san sat down on the coachman's seat, and steered two horned horses.

To choose a birthday present for Karen Bishop of the centaur race today, we went to the town 1 hour away from the castle.

When I told master,

"Hahahahaha! Is that so! Then go and buy something you like! This should be enough, right?"

He handed over a bag with more than 50 gold coins.

I received it with trembling hands

I thought that it was way too much for me but Merry san the head butler did not react when I glanced at him.

It seems he really intended to give me 50 gold pieces

And so we left for the town with Gigi san as a watchman and driver and I to take care of the money and Ojou-sama

Ojou sama has had a forlon expression ever since she boarded the carriage in the morning

Looks like it really is difficult for her to go outside even after nearly two years.

I made conversation in an attempt to improve the mood.

“Which reminds me, this is the first time since I began working in the Vlad household that I’m going into town. What kind of place might it be? I was so excited yesterday that I couldn’t sleep.”

[It has been a long time for me as well, so I am looking forward to it.]

While I wasn’t exactly excited enough to not be able to sleep I suppose this little lie is acceptable to improve the mood.

Ojou-sama joins in the conversation.

It is slightly hard to read from the mini blackboard due to the dimness.

“There was an Adventurer’s Support Union Guild in a city in Fairyland, and the streets were filled with food stalls. The children were adorable as they held their pocket money tightly as they lined up in front of the candy vendors, were they not?”

[Though Onii-chan is only a 12 year old child, if you speak this way, you sound like an Oji-chan.]

Ojou-sama finally smiled after coming out of the estate.

While I currently look 12 years old on the outside, on the inside I am a 40 year old man with my previous life added. The words spoken might have been a little old-man-like.

But that’s alright if Ojou-sama laughs.

[If it is regarding stalls selling confectioneries, there's also some at the town that we are heading to. I have previously tried some while shopping with the others on our day off. Speaking of them, Karen-chan had her fried confection stolen by a crested pigeon while she was in the midst of eating it. Though it was unfortunate for Karen-chan, we all laughed about it.]

Karen really has a <abbr title="TLC Note: it's more of saying Karen is constantly at the butt of jokes rather than her actual character">sweet character</abbr>.

I couldn't do something like that even if I tried

With such a feeling I chatted with Ojou-sama until we reached the town.

The tension that made her body shiver seems to be gone, but we continue to hold hands.

▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼

The city is on an open field, and although it wasn't very tall, the city was surrounded by a wall.

After receiving an inspection at the gate, we enter the town.

There are no large buildings; the general populace coming out and gathering gives it the feeling of a merchant city. Due to the large variety of goods and services available, there are many people coming and going.

The carriage is left at the carriage parking lot.

And I paid the parking fees and water fee for the horned horses.

[……Then, shall we go?]

Ojou sama readjusted her hat and gripped my hand tightly.

I return the grip firmly so as to not get separated from Ojou-sama.

The plan is for Ojou-sama and me, the 2 of us, to look around town

while shopping.

Ojou-sama is told that Gigi-san will be looking around town separately from us. In reality, he is to keep an arranged distance and make sure that no danger befalls us.

“I understand. Well then Gigi-san, we will come back in the evening.”

“……Understood. But pay attention to one thing.”

Gigi-san takes one step and he draws his mouth close to my ear.

‘No matter what happens, do not let go of Ojou-sama’s hand. And never lose sight of her.’

‘Alright. I will be careful.’

‘And then, if you do more than holding hands with Ojou-sama like I said before……I guess, you understand? I will always have a close eye on you. So when it’s only the two of you, and you have desire for Ojou-sama, I won’t pardon Lute. Consider your Life done. You understand.’

We’re not even alone; you are worrying too much.

From behind, he painfully grasps my shoulder with an almighty grip.

His blood-shot eyes are scary.

‘That’s all. Take care of Ojou-sama properly.’

After having worried like a father leaving his daughter, Gigi-san removes his hand from my shoulder to disappear into the crowd.

Gigi-san’s appearance was not like someone who would overprotect his daughter….

I regain my spirit and escort Ojou-sama for now.

“Then shall we go, too?”

Nodding, Ojou-sama clasps my hand with a smile and we begin to walk.

The place we aim for is aligned at the corner of the shopping district.

The stores line up at both ends almost without a gap and high-spirited calling comes forth from the stores.

It was really lively. Ojou-sama with a short stature seems to have difficulty breathing in the huge crowd of people.

“Are you alright, Ojou-sama? Shall we change locations?”

She shakes her head side-to-side quickly.

I feel from her strong will that for choosing a birthday present for her friend Karen, this much is nothing.

“At which shop should we look first?. If it’s Karen-sama, she would be happy with things like a sword or spear, a shield, or something like an armour, to name some?”

[Mou Lute-onii-chan, there is no girl who would be happy to get something like that.]

Ojou-sama puffs her cheeks with a “pun-pun” and gets angry.

I’m not scared at all.

Rather, it’s too cute.

I spontaneously poke at her puffed cheeks and the air leaves from her mouth.

Though Ojou-sama is getting angry at my tomfoolery, her cheeks puffed out once again.

This is seriously dangerously cute.

I can’t I can’t. Like this, it will become an infinite loop of poking

Ojou-sama's cheeks.

I utter an apology earnestly.

"Sorry. They are surely not presents to give a lady."

But I think Karen who is from a military lineage would be happy.

But that's better left unsaid.

"Has Ojou-sama thought of anything?"

[Yes. I Intend to give Karen-chan an accessory that I think would suit her.]

Ojou-sama writes skillfully on her mini blackboard while linking her arm with mine.

On that occasion, her chest that's still small is pushed against my arm.

It's hard, but still, I can certainly feel her chest.

While Snow's were like, [Funya, Poyon] ; these have a certain firmness despite their soft feeling, have completely distinct vectors, and give the feeling of a miracle that defies logic.

The unripe fruit is still green.

Taking a bite off the apple that has yet to ripen, a sourness spread–but there was a certain sweetness within the sourness. Precisely because it is sour, the sweetness remains at the tip of the tongue and leaves a deep impression.

Furthermore the so called 11-y/o boobs.

It's forbidden, a taboo, to step into such a holy place.

But even so, there is an immoral feeling, like being the first to soil the fresh snowfall.

Needless to say that there's such dangerous sweetness in Ojou-sama's boobs.

Snow's boobs are the best, but Ojou-sama's boobs are also good.

Furthermore if I look at Madam, the future will be promising.

[!?]

As such thoughts about boobs are developing, I feel a thick bloodlust on my neck.

As it hit me, I look restlessly around from shop to shop and see Gigi-san peeking from the space between them.

With the look in his eyes and the blood thirst he put into it, he could easily kill a small animal.

…I got a little too excited. Sorry.

[Is something wrong?]

Ojou-sama tilts her head in wonder.

No, it's nothing. Accessory, is it? Then Karen will certainly be happy to get it.

[Tehehehe, I thought hard about it. Let's go this way. There is a merchant with reasonable prices.]

Ojou-sama leads me by the hand through the crowd.

I take one last look at Gigi-san's direction, but his figure can no longer be seen.

Really, if it involves Ojou-sama, Gigi-san easily loses all of his control…

▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼

I leave it to Ojou-sama who is familiar with the area to lead me through the crowd and we advance toward the inside.

As the crowd thins, the number of wealthy-looking people wearing well-tailored clothes increases.

[This is it. It's a store where I used to shop at with everyone in the past.]

This place, huh…

A shop with white walls made of stone.

Even compared to Ginza, Japan from my previous life, the products and atmosphere are good.

Indeed, an atmosphere that seems to only want to deal with wealthy people drifts furiously.

While I was still hesitating, Ojou-sama casually steps over the entrance as if just entering a convenience store.

Just by taking a single step into the store, I feel like I was in a totally different dimension.

First off, the air smells different.

Citrus aroma with a faint sweetness could be smelled drifting and it is so refreshing.

To one side of the floor, where red carpet is laid out, a glass showcase is lined up.

The number of items available seem few, when compared to the spaciousness of the store.

There is a chandelier on the ceiling.

Its light source was probably magic.

Items such as paintings and well-arranged vases of flowers are on display alongside the walls.

Inside the store, apart from ourselves, there is a young married couple walking arm-in-arm as they are looking around the store led by a clerk.

We, who entered the store, were staring at the heartwarming sight of the couple.

From a third-person perspective, we, who were holding hands, definitely look like a young couple.

The young married couple both had blue skin and had horns growing out of their foreheads; they were of the demon race.

An idle clerk notices us and approaches with a smile.

“Welcome… … ! Oh, Vlad-sama, it has been a while.”

[Indeed it has.]

A well-proportioned, tall, elderly, and gentlemanlike clerk.

His height is around 180 cm and wears a butler-like suit as well as white gloves. Though he looks like he is of the human race, a black tilde-shaped tail extends from his pants.

Without even batting an eye towards Ojou-sama who uses a mini blackboard to talk, he continues conversing and not with a business smile, but with a welcoming smile that came from the heart.

“And so, to what do we owe this pleasure?”

[I am thinking of giving Karen-chan an accessory for her birthday. Do you have something that may suit her?]

“I see, alright. Well then, please wait a moment.”

Said the clerk and he went into the back of the store.

[It seems that just by saying the name “Karen-chan”, he is able to understand who the gift is meant for.]

Even if they are former regulars, to remember their names and faces… a pro truly is different.

“What a cute girlfriend…”

While waiting for the elderly clerk, we happen to start talking with the young couple who have made a purchase and are heading out.

Hearing the words “cute girlfriend”, Ojou-sama’s face becomes 10 times redder than usual.

Add her shyness on top of that and she ends up hiding behind my back.

“Thank you very much for your praise. At any rate, my Mistress has extreme anxiety of strangers. Please forgive us for our discourteous attitude.”

“Eh? A servant? I thought for sure… …”

“Hey! You’re being rude.”

The man scolds the woman.

“Not at all, please pay it no heed. Rather, it is a great honor for me to be mistaken as Ojou-sama’s lover.”

As for Ojou-sama, a related party, she is red up to her ears after hearing my words as she grinds her forehead against me.

Ouch… It’s painful, Ojou-sama.

We made conversation like so and before long, several accessories are brought out from inside.

On the glass showcase, 5 accessories are lined up.

From the right, they are earrings, a necklace, a ring, a ring and a bracelet.

Each one implements a piece of large red gem.

Ojou-sama shows herself from my back and picks up each of the 5 accessories one by one to look at.

“For Bishop-sama who is a mix of gallantry and cuteness, I thought that rubies would suit her well and prepared these.”

[Now that you mention it, red does suit Karen-chan well, doesn’t it?]

”The necklace over here makes use of a large piece of ruby and is a new product from an up-and-coming artisan, a top highlight from next month’s releases. It’s only for Vlad-sama that I would present it on this day.”

What’s with this VIP treatment?

[Though it is beautiful, it feels like it would be disproportionate on Karen-chan’s neck… … What are Onii-chan’s thoughts on it?]

“Ah, err…. Certainly it’s a little too showy, I think… “

“Well then, how about these earrings? The gem is small, but that sort of design is the current trend.”

[These earrings are so pretty…]

Ojou-sama takes the bait.

Ojou-sama narrows down on giving earrings for the present, and even checked over a dozen different delicate designs.

Among those, she picked ruby earrings with a simple design.

Its price was 1 gold coin.

That would be approximately 100,000 Japanese Yen .

As a present to a friend, it seemed a bit excessive, but Ojou-sama wholly paid it no heed.

Well… even a slave like myself was bought as a gift, so it's probably not a huge amount of money for her family.

Since we wanted the earrings to be nicely wrapped, it would be picked up at a later date.

We then left the shop with the elderly clerk seeing us off.

[Because of Onii-chan, I was able to pick Karen-chan's present with no qualms. Thank you.]

"I am honored to have been of use to Ojou-sama. Well then, what should we do now? We still have some time 'till the evening."

If we're going home, then we should return to the carriage.

Most likely, Gigi-san is still, from somewhere, monitoring us… or not. He's just doing his job as a bodyguard.

If we return to the rendezvous point at this time right now, there should be time left over.

But Ojou-sama showed positiveness unexpected from a former shut-in.

[If it's not too much trouble, I wanted to look around town since it's been a while.]

An outing after a long time.

Coming to the town where she often spent her off days with her friends must've made her recall all the fun times she had in the past.

I suppose the nostalgia made her want to take a walk.

Needless to say, there is no reason to object.

“Then let’s go look around various places until dusk. However, please do not push yourself too hard and tell me if you get tired. After all, we could always visit the town again any number of times.”

[All right!]

With a smile, Ojou-sama cheerfully writes on her mini blackboard.

Once again, hand in hand, we go back into the crowd.

Chapter 032 – Brothers

Together with Ojousama, we walked around the busy town.

While browsing through some small miscellaneous goods, we also looked at the colorful flowers in the flower shop.

We came to a well reputed clothes shop.

Some female students who remember young lady then came over and some idle chat was exchanged through the mini blackboard.

From my delusions, it seemed as if I was having a date together with her.

Speaking of which, the thing that made Ojousama's eyes sparkle the most today was some fried pastry being sold at a food cart.

It's close to what is known as 'fried bread' in my previous life.

The bread-like food is fried in oil and then smeared with sugar and spices, it seemed to be bad for the health.

It's about the size of a meat bun, with the price of 2 copper, or about 200 yen.

It seems like she used to buy and eat it often when going out to town with Karen and the others.

It's a well known item that, if you're a kid, you should absolutely have had it at least once, or something like that.

Instead of the afternoon tea party, we bought two well-made fried pastries.

They were wrapped in napkins which looked like the oak leaves used in rice cakes, even though it was bad manners, we ate it as we walked.

Ojousama ate it delightedly with gobbling noises, using her small mouth.

I felt happy just by looking at her doing that.

When I realized, Ojousama had already eaten all the pastry.

It seemed like she hadn't had enough and stole glances at my half-eaten one.

"….. Ojousama, if you like, do you want to eat mine?"

[B, but eating Onii-chan's share is just… unforgivable]

"No, don't worry about it. I'm actually full so you can have it if you like."

[Then I won't hold back, thank you very much!]

"But before that, there's sugar on your mouth so let me wipe it first. Ojousama, say [u~n] please."

Ojousama obediently pouted her mouth as if going for a kiss.

Because of her meekness and cuteness, I almost went in for that kiss, but regained my senses and stopped.

If I kissed her here, Gigi-san who's watching from somewhere would tear off my lips.

I took out a handkerchief from my pocket, wiped Ojousama's mouth, and handed her the fried pastry.

Not caring that it was half-eaten by me, Ojousama unhesitatingly put it in her mouth and smiled as if saying it's delicious.

When it seemed like we both got tired from walking at the same time, we took a rest and had tea.

The eatery was so crowded there was no space inside, so we sat on a

bench outside.

I bought a couple of wooden cups filled with fruit juice and went back to Ojousama.

Ojousama didn't look tired at all, and happily swung her legs back and forth while watching the people passing by.

That appearance of hers completely didn't seem like that of a girl who had stayed indoors for about two years.

The figure of a cute little girl appropriate for her age that you can find anywhere.

Unintentionally, I kept gazing at the side of Ojousama's face while holding my cup with both hands.

[Is there anything wrong, Lute onii-chan?]

She showed me her mini blackboard and tilted her head.

"Ojousama looked so cute, I unintentionally became fascinated."

As I praised Ojousama, her pure white skin seemed to change colors and became red.

[Geez, Lute onii-chan, please don't tease me]

"I'm sorry, my true opinion seemed to have leaked out by mistake."

[I said stop teasing me already!]

Even though I apologized to Ojousama, for some reason she puffed her cheeks like a hamster.

She's cute even when she's angry.

[…..!?]

"Ojousama?"

However, her face turned completely pale like a ghost.

I turned my head towards where Ojousama was looking—there were two adult men standing there.

One of them was tall and thin like a dried fish.

The other one was short and considerably wide .

An odd pair that seems to appear frequently in games or manga.

They both had a dumb smile pasted on their faces and dark desire gleaming out of their eyes. The quality of the clothes they had on were good but regardless, there's no elegance.

Their fingers, arms, and wrists were heavily decorated with jewels as if showing off, totally advertising their [crooked characters who had become wealthy suddenly] .

These are characters that I don't want anything to do with if I had the choice.

I wanted to ignore them, but Ojousama's eyes were fixed on them, and Gigi-san who should be guarding from a distance came running in panic.

Gigi-san stood in front of the men as if to protect us.

"….. do you have some business with us?"

"We were just going out to town and saw a familiar face, so we went to give our greetings. Right, elder brother?"

"That's right. So don't make such a scary face, Gigi."

"……"

Still wearing a scornful grin, the pair answered Gigi-san.

Their manner of speaking is like that of a master to their servant.

(Gigi-san, who are these two?)

(…… Master's siblings—The head of the Vampire Clan Pylkkänen Vlad-sama, and the second son Ravino Vlad-sama.)

Gigi-san indicated with his line of sight that the fat man is Pylkkänen and in turn the thin man is Ravino.

If you say the eldest and second sons of the Vlad house, they were the siblings who held a grudge towards Count Dan Gate Vlad because his assets far outstrip theirs, and once had a fight over it.

I finally see why Ojousama was startled and Gigi-san was wary of them.

There's no way these two would have goodwill towards Ojousama who was the count's daughter.

The fat man—Pylkkänen snorted like a pig and turned his gaze towards me.

"Is that brat the slave Dan bought the other day? Hmph, he looks withered and pale. Evidently, that Dan didn't give him enough food."

That's just because you're too fat!

"It's just like elder brother said, that Dan is such a stingy fellow."

The second son Ravino was sucking up to the eldest brother.

If master is stingy, then most people in this world would be total cheapskates!

I wanted to object, but a mere slave can't possibly raise his voice against his master's siblings.

Perhaps also enduring the insult, Gigi-san rolled his hands painfully into a fist.

The two's gazes turned away from me and towards Ojousama.

"Chrisse, we were worried since we heard you became a hikikomori. But you seem to be okay and can go outside. As your uncles we're happy to the limits. Right, younger brother?"

"Yes, elder brother. It is a most joyous occasion."

"Both of you, Ojousama has only just gone outside. it is probably best if you do not give her too much provocation–"

"Shut up Gigi! It's fine even if you hadn't said that just now!"

Gigi-san's expression turned bad at Pylkkänen's explosive remark.

Ojousama's slender shoulders trembled because of the angry voice.

"…… I beg your pardon."

"Tch, even though you're just a lowly beastman. Ah… right. Chrisse, as your uncles we're greatly moved that you're able to come out of your room just fine."

Pylkkänen continued his talk.

"But you see, it's not like we don't get why you'd want to stay indoors."

Pylkkänen made an ugly expression with his greasy face.

It was the face of a low-life who finds absolute joy in other people's suffering.

"At any rate, despite having our Vlad' house's superior bloodline, you don't have talent as a magician. If it were me I would've killed myself long ago. Right, younger brother?"

"It is really as elder brother said."

"Or maybe it could have been *that* , huh~"

“Hoo, what is that *elder* brother?”

“Younger brother, do you know about a bird called a cuckoo? Cuckoos have a trait called [Brood Parasitism] where it leaves its eggs in another bird’s nest replacing that bird’s own. It might have been possible that… my younger brother Dan could have suffered something like that. That man is stupid, just as he looks. He might not have noticed if his wife slept with another guy.”

“As expected from elder brother, such worldly wisdom.”

A blood vessel in my seemed seemed to have burst.

I don’t care even if it’s Master’s brother, he’s ridiculing Ojousama as a “talentless child born through madam’s extramarital affair”!

I unintentionally rolled my hands tightly into a fist.

“O, Ojousama!”

As I looked back because of Gigi-san’s panicked voice, Ojousama ran away, covering her ears.

She went running in the opposite direction of Pylkkänen and Ravino.

I’m going to lose sight of her like this!

“Lute, leave this to me. You go after Ojousama!”

“A, all right!”

I left the wooden cup in my hand on the bench and ran after Ojousama.

As I went, I let out a fierce glare at Pylkkänen and Ravino.

Because she didn’t have much exercise, Ojousama’s legs soon gave out.

Even so, because a vampire's base ability was higher in comparison to a human, I wasn't able to catch up immediately.

gasp

"Watch where you're going! Pay attention!"

Ojousama bumped into a man carrying a wooden box and fell to the ground.

Unfortunately she fell into a moist patch of mud.

Her freshly washed white clothes, face, body, and hair became dirty with mud.

"Ojousama!"

Because she fell down I could finally catch up to her.

Ojousama made no attempt to get up from her fallen state.

As I rushed over to pick her up, I saw her eyes empty and lacking energy—she was languid.

This girl's face who was smiling brightly just a few minutes ago was now gloomy and devoid of emotion.

Even when I met her for the first time she had a better expression.

"Ojousama, I beg your pardon."

"……"

I excused myself and carried Ojousama in my arms and then ran to the place where we left the coach.

Once we managed to arrive there, I seated her on a bench outside.

I paid for some water and washed her clean of mud, starting with her hands and face, then her hair.

On Ojousama's palms that were red like the leaves of autumn, blood was oozing out from the grazed skin.

It wasn't a big injury.

If it's something like this, it can be healed with Gigi-san's healing magic without leaving a scar.

And yet my heart was furiously struck with sorrow.

I washed away Ojousama's filth, wiped her clean, and placed her on the coach.

Gigi-san turned up 30 minutes afterwards.

He healed Ojousama's wounds with healing magic.

We left town on the coach as if running away.

"……"

"……"

There were just Ojousama and I inside the coach.

Ojousama was hugging her knees, making herself small.

I was also silent and just continued to sit across from her.

—As Ojousama looked up, she wrote on the mini blackboard.

[… my classmates used to tell me the same thing back when I still went to school.]

What the vampire family head and second son had said earlier was [Chrisse's parents are magicians and yet, why is she talentless as a magician?].

[I had also resisted at first. There's a chance that abilities don't get

inherited even if both parents are magicians. But every time I said that they just laughed at me without properly listening to me…]

Ojousama wrote with trembling fingertips.

[Lute onii-chan, Am I a despicable existence for not inheriting magical talent? Am I unnecessary?]

I shook my head sideways.

I was also bullied in my previous life, so I knew exactly what Ojousama wanted to hear.

So I looked straight into her eyes and declared.

"I don't know about other people, but master and madam definitely doesn't think that way. Also Gigi-san, Merry-san, Mercè-san, Malcolm-san, and all the other servants, including me of course, none of us care about whether or not Ojousama can do magic! We all love Ojousama! We're happy just from seeing Ojousama smiling!"

"…….!"

It's tough on Ojousama being looked down by others and being the topic of malicious gossip.

But the most frightening thing of all is how her parents think of her.

Maybe, just maybe, they think she's a [good-for-nothing] because their magician's abilities didn't pass on to her.

When I became a hikikomori because I was afraid of being made a target by those delinquents, I was afraid to even find out what my parents think of my miserable self.

So I did all I could to stay inside and reduced contact with family members as much as possible. I came under the impression that they didn't care about me, and finally our relations soured.

That's why I told Ojousama this.

We'll be her allies, even if she can't be a magician, even if the whole world would turn against her.

We will always be by her side.

Those feelings seem to have reached her, and Ojousama once again burst into tears.

She slowly reached her hands out, grabbed my butler suit, and pressed her face down onto it.

sob

Ojousama continued crying while trying to muffle her voice.

As if she was letting out all the sadness that's been filling her chest.

I continued to gently stroke her soft hair the whole time until she stopped crying.

Chapter 033 – Surprise Party

"Lute, where are we going?"

Whenever she was called over for a tea party, the Centaur Karen Bishop would usually head for Ojousama's room in the second floor.

But this time I was guiding her towards the first floor dining hall.

That's why she was wondering and asked me about it.

"The great dining hall. Everyone is already waiting there."

"Everyone?"

She heard my reply and tilted her head.

Before she could ask another question, we reached the doors of the dining hall.

I knocked and called out.

"I've brought Karen-sama"

I had Karen stand in front of the door, and it slowly opened—

""'Karen-chan, happy birthday!""

"!?"

With a soft popping sound, Karen's body was showered with confetti and tape made of cloth.

Karen flinched hearing a sound she had never heard before.

Then there was the sound of an uproarious applause.

In the dining hall there were Chrisse-ojousama, master, madam, and

the servants of the Vlad house.

There was also the three-eyed Barnie Bloomfield.

Also the Lamia (half-snake) Muir Head.

Also finally, there were maids that Barnie and Muir brought along to help, they were all giving a grand applause.

The walls of the dining hall were decorated with multicolored string flowers.

Then there was a banner with the words [Happy 11th Birthday, Karen-chan] written on it in Demon Language.

While Karen was still trying to grasp the situation, Ojousama stepped up to her, holding a bouquet.

[Karen-chan, happy birthday]

“C, Chrisse!?”

Karen was once again surprised because Ojou-sama, who supposedly could not go out of her room because of being bullied, was now here in front of her eyes.

As she took the bouquet, she finally realized that this gathering is a surprise birthday party for her.

Karen burst into tears, looking as if a dam just broke.

“C, Chrisse is such a good friend, to go so far as going out of your room just to celebrate my birthday! Everyone, thank you! I have such really good friends!”

[……]

All of Karen’s childhood friends in the hall, including Ojousama looked at each other.

Last time, the other two had found out when they met to prepare for the birthday party that Ojousama was able to go out of her room. Of course, they also knew that she didn't go out specifically for Karen.

But no one had the heart to deny.

They only smiled awkwardly, but Karen, who was being moved to tears, took no notice.

As soon as she went inside the hall, she immediately received presents.

"The first one's from me, okay"

The three-eyed Barnie presented her present.

It's about the size of a 5 kg sack of rice.

"It's a magic-imbued piggybank. It's absolutely impossible to open until you reach a set amount of money, so do your best in filling it, okay."

"Thank you, Barnie. I'll use it with great care."

It was quite the appropriate present from a money-changer's daughter.

[Next is me.]

Ojousama handed over a small box tightly wrapped in cloth on the palm of her hands.

[They're just earrings, but I'll be glad if you happily accept them.]

"Thank you Chrisse. I won't be able to wear them everyday, but I'll use them for parties or important days."

"The last one's from me. I'll be happy if you could use them together with Chrisse's present."

A maid the Lamia Muir brought along had the present.

Hers was the only one that was not wrapped, and was spread out right there for all to see.

The present she prepared was a lavish dress that made you wonder whether they used too much lace.

It was pink in color, with white lace sewed on it like whipped cream.

Rather than a party dress, it would be called in my previous life as sweet lolita fashion.

Karen was speechless at Muir's present at first, then her face turned red.

"M, Muir! What's with this frilly, fluttery dress! Don't you think it doesn't suit this strict warrior me!"

"Not at all. It'll be fine, it reeeally suits Karen."

"You're still teasing me again!"

Karen, with her face red, got angry.

But ojousama and three-eyed Barnie backed Muir.

"That's not it at all, Karen-chan has a pretty face and a nice figure, so you'll look good in it"

[The earrings I gave were simple, but I think they strike a good balance with that dress. Please wear them and show us next time.]

"Well, but, um…"

The two seriously insisted that she would look good in it.

Therefore Karen who wanted to deny it found it hard to respond.

Karen threw a clumsy smile at Muir.

"T, thanks Muir. I'll keep it carefully so it doesn't get dirty."

“I’m glad you liked it. Wear it the next time we have a tea party, kay”

“W, well that’s if I feel like it, eh. Ahahahaha.”

“Fufufufufu…..”

The two continued their give and take quietly.

Once they finished fighting, the band that master and the others prepared started playing.

Accompanied by the music, the ojousamas got started on the food.

The food was gathered and prepared by the three families.

Muir’s Lamia family brought a seafood dinner.

Barnie’s three-eyed clan brought meat.

Ojousama’s side were responsible for other dishes that were simple to pick up (in Japan they would be called something like hors d’œuvres).

Also the head chef Malcolm-san went all out and prepared a mountain of desserts that the Demon Race would like.

Cakes and cookies were a matter of course.

The snacks I made—Giant pudding made in the shape of a ball, mille crèpe with the crèpes cut into hearts, potato chips and a lot of other kinds of snacks were also prepared.

The ojousamas, master, madam, and the maids from the Lamia and Three-eyed families happily feasted on them all.

We the servants of the Vlad house hosting the event were working at the kitchen or going around delivering drinks.

It was not much trouble since there were only few participants.

The head butler Merry-san put all his mind into the work.

Karen asked a question while eating the giant pudding that had been cut up.

“But, what exactly is that popping sound and the small pieces of cloth and string at the door?”

[Those were party toys called [Crackers] that Lute-oniichan made]

“Crackers?”

I made them with permission from master for the opening of the party.

The paper in this world were expensive and doesn’t have the stiffness so I substituted them with wood.

I put in leftover cloth, cut into fine pieces, and string into the wooden tubes like a kaleidoscope.

When the string is pulled, the contents would fly out thanks to the powder that was put inside.

I never thought my gun-making skills would be useful to this extent.

When I finished my explanations, Karen became lost in thought.

“What an interesting device…. Couldn’t we use it to make a new kind of weapon?”

“Hey hey, what is the birthday girl pondering about. Your family work can wait until after the party”

“S, sorry.”

[But actually, it seems a magic weapon like that already exists. I think it’s called an AK-47 if I’m not mistaken]

Ojousama replied using the mini blackboard.

Her friends turned their gazes towards me.

……this is not a good time to talk about the AK-47, right?

It's already too late for any excuses, so I gave a straight answer.

"It's a magic device that uses explosion magic to propel a small metal slug to kill or wound the enemy."

"Something like that exists? This is the first time I've heard of it. Is it a common weapon in the Fairy Human Continent?"

Belonging to a family whose business is in developing and producing weapons, Karen was interested.

I had no obligation to answer honestly, so I dodged the question.

"Normally people have no knowledge of it. It seems to be an unusual weapon. Even when I was in the Fairy Human Continent I only heard of it in passing."

"Where in the Fairy Human Continent did you hear of it? Did you hear about anything else?"

"Hey Karen-chan, didn't Muir-chan just tell you off?"

Barnie held back Karen's barrage of questions.

"You're the guest of honor for tonight so eat up, eat up. This cake's really good you know."

"S, sorry. It's surely sweet and tasty."

Eating the cake Barnie recommended, Karen broke into a smile.

I made my escape after making sure she's too occupied to start questioning me again.

As I escaped toward the walls, Merry-san ran past me towards master in a state of panic.

Merry-san whispered something to him, who was sitting in a sofa together with madam, eating mille crèpe.

“!?”

I felt an overwhelming pressure, despite being in the opposite wall from him.

Even the musicians became frightened and stopped their hands.

Ojousama’s friends also turned their heads, wondering what happened.

Only one person out of everyone there, madam, was able to reproach master while drinking scented tea.

“Darling, do calm down a little. Magic power is leaking out of your whole body.”

“…… Hahahahaha! Sorry, sorry! I was a little careless there.”

“Good grief, your carelessness is unbecoming of your appearance.”

The two laughed happily with each other, not minding their surroundings.

With the right timing, master cleared his throat.

“Well, I beg your pardon. There’s a bit of an internal matter so I became distracted.”

The feeling of oppression that I felt for the first time.

That is surely the pressure of the A-ranked magician master being seriously angry.

But what [Internal Matter] could make him so seriously angry?

Master spoke carefreely, as if talking about tomorrow’s weather.

“It seems that my brothers are gearing up for another war.”

Master’s brothers!

Immediately the faces of the unbalanced combo of Pylkkänen and Ravio floated into my mind.

Once upon a time, they made up an excuse to go to war against master in order to seize his belongings.

The enemy, the vampire house, numbered 1000 people, 50 among them are magicians.

Opposing them are the Vlad house who can only field 50 people beginning with master and madam. However the result was the Vlads’ complete victory.

That was obvious. Master is an A-rank mage—that is the domain of monsters that only a handful of talented people can reach with great effort.

Once master and his men trampled all their enemies flat and defeated the baka-brothers, the brothers immediately apologized.

Master only smiled and forgave them at their request, without asking for money or any demands other than their apology.

“My brothers did something embarrassing, starting a fight even though it’s my family and my daughters’ friends’ fun time… Even though they’re my brothers, I need to teach them a lesson.”

Though his tone of voice was calm and he was smiling as he said that, I could feel his muscles bulging underneath his fancy clothes.

“That’s right isn’t it. We went too easy on them last time. This time we should be more strict, right, darling?”

Madam was agreeing with what master said.

Madam, too, was firing off a suffocating intent to kill even while

dressed in her fine clothes.

"Therefore I must ask for your pardon, Bishop-san, to pour cold water on your long-awaited party. I will make it up to you sometime."

"I thank you for your concern, Lord Count. But there is no need to worry, it can't be helped since it's a family conflict. Honestly, I had fun this time. I will also certainly show you my gratitude in the near future"

Karen politely bowed her head in thanks.

"So, should we disperse now?"

"Right. It can't be helped since it's a family affair, we should go back so we don't hold them back"

The Lamia Muir and 3-eyed Barnie disinterestedly started packing, unsurprised with the attack, not to mention that it was by the main family.

Those two as well knew that the main family once declared war once in the past, so maybe that's why they're so indifferent about it.

The head maid Mercè-san whispered to me, who was making an incredulous face.

(Lute is a human, so you may not be familiar with it, but for the Demon Race it's a matter of manners to [not speak out regarding family wars]. The Demon Race has more varied families than the other 4 races, right? Families had their own customs and differences of habit so by tacit understanding it is agreed that others shouldn't interfere with it)

I see.

So that's why no one asked about the circumstances or whether they needed any help.

"Mercè, Lute, you two please see off ojousama's guests. Afterwards, take ojousama to her room baa~"

The head butler Merry-san who suddenly was next to me started

laying down the orders.

We responded and started moving.

Merry-san left to convey the orders to the other servants.

In order to prepare for the war with the brothers—

Chapter 034 – War

Acting as chaperone for ojousama, we saw Karen and her other friends off.

Then we accompanied ojousama back to her room.

The head maid Mercè-san brewed some scented tea to calm down ojousama's mood.

Seated beside the bed, ojousama made an anxious face.

[I wonder if father and the others are alright……]

"I'm sure they are fine. No matter who the enemy was, we have master who is an A-ranked mage, right? He won't lose no matter what."

I had Mercè-san, who was returning after she finished brewing the scented tea, replace me in accompanying ojousama.

"I need to leave my post for a while, so please take care of ojousama."

"…… All right. Don't do anything rash."

"?"

Mercè-san guessed my intentions, and immediately gave her approval.

But ojousama made an anxious face again and grasped the hem of my shirt with her small hand.

[Lute-oniichan, where are you going?]

"Don't worry, I forgot something in my room, I'm only going to go back and get it."

[Is…. that so.]

Ojousama also seemed to have guessed and released her tiny fingers, making a gloomy expression.

She bravely put on a bitter smile like she's trying to endure something.

[Be careful, and godspeed.]

"Yes, I'll be off. I'll be back soon."

I left ojousama's room and hurriedly made for the great dining hall.

▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼

"No way. We can't possibly bring Lute along."

Master and the others proceeded with the preparations in the dining hall.

The remaining food were put in ceramic bowls and became instant field rations.

Weapons and armor were taken out of armories and were checked for damage.

Master had already taken off his coat, and was warming up by doing shadowboxing.

Madam was putting on the equipment brought by the maids in a practiced manner.

In all likelihood, these are the weapons and armor she used in her pirate hunting days.

I ran up to Gigi-san who is directing the battle preparations and reported that I wanted to participate in the war this time.

It's because of the matter the other day—when the baka-brothers insulted not only ojousama but master and madam, I won't be satisfied unless I get to hit them at least once.

But Gigi-san refused.

I snapped back at him.

“Why!? I can use magic a little, I can be useful for the war!”

“No. Lute is ojousama’s guardian, right? Do you intend to leave your post for the battlefield. You don’t have battle experience in the first place, right? Bringing a green soldier along is just going to hold us back.”

My arguments were cut off by Gigi-san’s valid reasoning.

Master’s side has only a few participants.

Probably no more than 50 people.

However, every one of them are people with experience from the previous war or former adventurers he got to know a long time ago.

Therefore they were at the level where they can cooperate without any complaints.

If an inexperienced newcomer were to come in, that could become a source for discord.

Furthermore, even the head butler Merry-san sided with Gigi-san.

“That’s right Lute. You’re ojousama’s guard and blood bag. Just leave this war to us. If it’s that kind of rabble we’ll finish them off in the blink of an eye baa~”

Certainly, our side has master.

The other servants’ morale were high, too

Some of the maids participating in the battle were menacing, wearing armor and shields on top of their maid uniforms and carrying weapons.

Even the head chef Malcolm-san seems to be participating with kitchen knives hanging from all over his body.

He was scary in an absurd way, like something out of a horror flick.

However, I was told off.

“C, certainly I don’t have battle experience, but I’m sure I can be helpful…”

“I told you you can’t, give it up. Rather, you should stay by ojousama. Then… protect ojousama with your life. I beg of you.”

“Gigi-san?”

Strangely, Gigi-san pleaded me with a stern look and tone of voice.

Questions popped up in my mind for an instant, but he started with the preparations once again.

“Gigi, prepare the anti-silver drug for curing silver poison just in case. We still have some in the stores don’t we baa~?”

Like Dracula in my previous life, silver is poison to the vampire race.

This poison can’t be removed with normal antidote, it’s the natural enemy of vampires.

Silver poison cannot be cured other than by using special medication, the anti-silver drug.

Therefore normally, tableware and accessories made of silver are never ever used.

“Of course. It’s the head of the guards’ duty to prepare enough to deal with it once the need arises. I already ordered to stuff it inside the carriages.”

“As expected from Gigi, you’re quick when it comes to your work baa~”

If I’m here any longer, I’ll be a nuisance….

With a bow, I left the great dining hall.

Like a child who left home with harsh words and came back, I returned to ojousama's room.

I knocked and entered after receiving a response.

"Excuse me. I apologize for leaving my post."

Seeing my face, ojousama let out a sigh of relief.

[Welcome back, Lute-oniichan. Did you find the thing you're looking for?]

Perhaps revenge for making her worry, ojousama gave a strangely malicious retaliation.

I made an ironic smile.

"No, I remembered that I forgot the important thing here and came back in a hurry"

Hearing my reply, ojousama's face turned red and she shyly hid behind her mini blackboard.

Ojousama's reaction is really cute, huh.

cough

With Merce-san's cough, the pink atmosphere went back to normal.

She relaxed her expression a little.

"Well then, let's wish for master and the others' victory and safety and wait in the castle."

We nodded at Merce-san's words.

I should also stop selfishly insisting to go fight together with them and

just wish for their safety.

▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼

—Outsider POV—

Head of the Vampire Clan's main family, Pylkkänen Vlad.

Ravio Vlad.

Working underneath them were 50 B-minus ranked mages belonging to the Vampire clan's main family.

Besides those, there were over 950 mercenary adventurers hired from the Adventurers' Guild.

In total there were about 1000 people.

On the other hand, the Count's family were headed by Count Dan Gate Vlad, and Seras Gate Vlad.

The Head of Guards Gigi, Head Butler Merry, Head Chef Malcolm.

Alongside over 40 other servants.

50 people in total.

The difference in power was by a factor of 20.

しかし伯爵側は誰１人悲観しておらず、悲壮感は全く無い。

But nobody on the Count's side was pessimistic, no one was feeling grim.

むしろ余裕の態度を崩さなかった。

In fact, they did not lose their composure.

The place where they were to face off was a plain about 2 hours away from the town where Lute went to find presents.

The Demon Race don't interfere with each others' family matters.

But it's another matter if they cause trouble for the other families.

Therefore it's a matter of manners that when some family matter occurs, care is taken so that they don't cause trouble for the other clans. That's why an open place with no people was chosen.

"You did well to come and not run away you stupid brother! This time we'll stop your treasonous acts against the Vampire clan! Prepare to be judged!"

The fat eldest brother Pylkkänen, clad in pointlessly extravagant armor and riding a white horned-horse, raised an angry voice.

The lanky second brother Ravio beside him gave an exaggerated nod at what he said and put on a vulgar expression.

"By 'treason' do you mean using the family's money improperly like last time? Calling my magic schooling funds 'improper' is…… Anyway, wasn't I allowed double the money under the pretext of family assistance in the first place?"

"Sh, shut up! Don't think your crime is forgiven just by returning the money!"

"It is just as elder brother says!"

"Really, you guys are persistent as usual. Enough already, why can't you just leave me alone."

The Count breathed a sigh of amazement.

By doing that, he angered them even further.

"Y-You have always been that way since way back! Even though you're just a third born, you got a magician's license and attaining a top-notch rank of A ranked. You're just the younger brother! Know your place! Get him, punks!"

At the cue of Pylkkänen's yelling, the soldiers started running.

All the magicians started chanting their spells.

"My older brothers never change."

The Count raised one hand toward everyone and walked out alone.

As if he's saying "I'll do it myself so stand back."

The lump of muscle over 2.5 meters in height naked above the waist walked out.

The magicians of the main Vampire house simultaneously fired their magic at the Count.

Blades of ice, spears of fire, arrows of water, whips of wind—either because they wanted to test things or because they didn't want to hurt the soldiers, elementary-level attack magic rained down on the Count.

"Hahahahaha! Humm, you're better trained that before. I'm impressed!"

Bathed under the rain of magic attacks, the Count steadily walked on.

His body did not even receive a millimeter of scratches.

"Drop dead!"

The soldiers finally reached the Count

One of them swung a large sword at him.

The Count wasn't even noticing.

"……Ha?"

The large sword easily broke like a toy as it came into contact with the Count.

He was alright, of course.

“Hahahahahaha! You still have a long way to go! Your steps are too naive! Even my Lute is stronger than this!”

“Guh!?”

The swordsman was blown off by a flick to his forehead and fell rolling down.

Meanwhile a large axe came swinging down, and a bolt from a bowgun flew to his head. A spear also rushed in, pointed at his stomach.

However, none of them could deal any damage to the Count.

“Well then, it’s about time for me to fight back!”

The Count rolled his right hand tightly into a fist and slowly drew it back.

His titanic muscles swelled up further, his veins popping out.

“Hmph!”

flash

The mass of adventurers were blown off by the shockwave from the Count’s attack like dry leaves.

Also, the magic barrier that took 10 magicians to create was easily pierced and destroyed by the Count’s mana shockwaves.

If Lute were there he would be reminded of bowling in his previous life and yelled out [Strike!]

“Y, you monster!”

Pylkkänen wholeheartedly swore at his younger brother, pale in the face.

His younger brother Dan Gate Vlad was an A-ranked mage.

He possessed a large amount of mana, so much that it would flow out of his body if he was careless, but he himself isn't fairly skilled in either attack magic or support magic.

For that reason the Count was looked down upon by people around him at first.

Pearls before swine, they said.

However, the Count paid no heed, forging his body as a weapon in order to leave the Demon Continent, gaining abilities, and continuously practicing magic with enthusiasm.

Thanks to that he gained an original means of attack and defence that does not rely on attack nor support magic.

Using the magic power that flows out of his body for defense, and diverting it to attack. He could even project it a long way away like he did just now.

As a result, the Count earned himself the title of an A-ranked mage.

Neither of his elder brothers Pylkkänen nor Ravio had any talent for magic.

In the beginning they made fun of the Count for having a huge amount of mana but not able to use it, but it turned out that their youngest brother became an A-ranked mage.

The "mage" that they longed for since they were children.

The brother they looked down upon became an A-ranked mage that only a handful of geniuses could become.

Jealousy, defeat, envy, inferiority—embittered by various emotions they came to see the Count as if he were the enemy of the family.

If he were somebody else, they wouldn't hate him to that extent.

It's because he was their blood-related brother that they became so madly jealous.

With just one strike, the main family's men became disheartened.

Swords couldn't hurt the Count and even magic had no effect.

Without a way to oppose him, it is inevitable that they could not see victory and morale dropped.

But even the Count had doubts on his superiority.

They must have adapted from the previous battle.

The brothers must have started this war with a scheme or way to secure victory.

Maybe a lethal trap directed at him, or maybe some special magic or treasure-class magic device—he just didn't know what.

The Count carefully observed Pylkkänen's camp.

That backfired on him.

He was late to realize that something happened in his own camp.

—guh…!

His wife Seras screamed, then spat blood

A silver dagger pierced and stuck on her flank through a gap in her armor.

The one who pierced her was—the head of guards, Gigi .

Chapter 035 – Escape

Lute, 12 years old.

The sun has set; it is now the domain of the night.

A few hours ago, the castle fell silent as if the boisterous fun times were a lie.

Chrisse-Ojousama appears to be anxious as she looks out the window.

The visage from not too long ago of the girl who was afraid of going outside was nowhere to be seen.

“Be at ease, Ojou-sama. Since the Master is personally going, our side losing is simply unimaginable.”

Mercè-san gently pats Ojou-sama’s shoulders.

Ojou-sama smiles in agreement.

“… … Ojou-sama, Mercè-san, please be silent.”

I call out the the two who were encouraging each other.

The first floor is strangely noisy.

Flustered voices, wild footsteps, and the like can be heard.

Mercè-san tenses up and holds Ojou-sama close to protect her.

There is knocking on the door.

It is rough.

It is rough to the level that if the head butler, Merry-san, was here, he would have angrily reprimanded whoever it was.

“…..Ojou-sama, Mercè-san, just to be safe, please step back.”

As I give out instructions, the two obediently obeys.

And I, just in case, pick up a letter opener.

I slowly reach for the doorknob and open the door.

There is one maid in the hallway.

She peeks inside the room with an impatient expression.

“I, is Ojou-sama here? There is an urgent report that I have to convey!”

“Report? What is it?”

“At present, Merry-san has returned, and the Master and Madam are–”

“!? Ojou-sama, Mercè-san! Take cover!”

“Kyaaaaa!”

The scream of the maid who was in the middle of reporting.

I immediately turn around and throw the paper-knife towards the window!

Right on cue, a man breaks through the 2nd floor window’s glass and lands in the room. At the same time, the paper-knife sticks into the enemy’s arm.

He had jumped up to the second floor from the courtyard by raising his physical ability with body strengthening magic. Having sensed signs of magic being used outside, I was able to promptly react.

“Guh — !”

The man looks to be in his early twenties.

He has an appearance similar to those of the human race, but since his canines were unusually long, perhaps he is a vampire like Ojou-sama's family.

He pulls out the paper-knife and starts healing.

"Glow in my hand, O soothing light. Be the glimmer that healeth me. Heal!"

He's probably one of the novices scraped up by Master's older brothers and their allies.

Even though the battle isn't over, he was paying an undue amount of attention to healing his wounds. It would appear that he's not accustomed to battle.

The result: he shows a huge opening.

I wasn't trained to be so naive as to overlook such an opening.

Just as Gigi-san had taught me, I quickly move in on the magician.

The male magician panics and swings the paper-knife he pulled out from his arm sideways as a diversion.

Compared to Master, it really wasn't fast or powerful at all.

I duck, easily evading, and throw a reinforced blow at his abdomen.

"Go ho!"

The man is coughing out saliva, falling over in agony.

Still I show no mercy and throw a palm heel strike at his jaw, throwing him out of the window he came in from.

Having been thrown out the window, the man hit the ground and stop moving.

His hands and feet are convulsing, so he probably wasn't dead…

He had merely fainted.

The enemy was a mage, but due to his lack of combat experience, I was able to fight him off.

But why was such a person in the castle?

“I, is Ojou-sama safe, baa~!?”

“Merry-san!”

“!?”

While I was confirming that the male mage I had thrown out had fainted, the head butler Merry-san tumbles into the room, his body full of injuries.

He was supposed to have gone to battle with Master and the rest.

Yet, why did he come back to the castle in such a tattered state?

A bad premonition is swelling in my heart.

But the bad news Merry-san brought with him surpasses even my wildest imaginations.

“Ojou-sama, there is something I must report. In the recent battle, due to the betrayal of our head guard, Gigi, Master was defeated baa~. ”

“ “ “ !? “ “ “

Ojou-sama, Mercè-san, and I couldn’t believe our ears.

There’s no way Gigi-san could have betrayed the Vlad house!

The servants all liked Master and Madam’s character and were highly loyal.

And even among them, Gigi-san was special.

He even treasured Ojou-sama as if she were his own daughter.

For such a person to be a traitor, there must be some sort of misunderstanding. It has to be a mistake!

I instinctively press the injured Merry-san for an explanation.

“To think Gigi-san would betray us, could it be some sort of mistake? Perhaps it was a fake impersonating Gigi-san!”

“He’s definitely not a fake. He stabbed the Madam with a silver knife, and used its toxicity to force the Master to surrender. Furthermore, he had, at some point, replaced our stock of anti-silver drugs with imitations using his authority as the head guard. With only the enemy in possession of anti-silver drugs, the Master, to save Madam, put on a magic prevention choker and surrendered baa~.”

Merry-san looks mortified as tears forms in the corner of his eyes.

“The main family took custody of the Master and Madam and is now marching towards the castle to capture Ojou-sama. I saw an opportunity and was able to escape, but was attacked by pursuers to this pathetic state… … The main family will arrive soon. Ojou-sama, quickly make preparations to escape baa~.”

Merry-san’s bloodcurdling advice.

However, Ojou-sama still couldn’t follow the overwhelming changes in the situation, simply pales, and becomes overcome with surprise.

Instead, Mercè-san starts moving.

“Excuse me, Ojou-sama.”

Mercè-san put on a coat made of thick fur for Ojou-sama who had changed out of her party dress and into her pyjamas.

Merry-san gives instructions to the other maid, the one who screamed earlier, to look for a jewel box in Ojou-sama’s room.

Furthermore, he grabs my arm with his hands which were still wet with blood.

“Lute, after this, go to the hidden passage that no one other than the Master, Madam, and I know. From there, take Ojou-sama and escape far away baaa~.”

“What do Merry-san and the rest intend to do?”

“We will attract the attention of the main family and buy you some time.”

I grind my teeth at that reply.

Merry-san tightens his bloody fists.

“Please forgive us for being so worthless that we have to rely on Lute even though you’re still just a 12 year-old child. However, right now, the only one that can protect Ojou-sama is Lute. Please, please! Please protect Ojou-sama baa~”

“… … Of course. I will show that I can fulfill my duty as Ojou-sama’s butler-cum-blood bag.”

“Thank you baa~”

Around the time I finished talking with Merry-san, Ojou-sama’s preparations have been completed.

Ojou-sama is still pale, and her eyes aren’t focused.

Her mind is still unable to cope with reality.

“Now then, let us go to the dining hall on the first floor.”

Lending the bloody Merry-san a hand, we head toward the 1st floor dining hall.

The dining hall that the Master and Madam always used.

A luxurious, elegant chair in a long table. Massive curtains, gilded candlestands, vases arranged with vibrant flowers — and a hearth that's a world of difference from that in the servant mess room I usually use.

Merry-san pushs a certain stone brick among the walls in the hearth.

Under the pile of firewood, a linked piece of stone rises.

Merry-san picks up the stone with his trembling hands, and a metal handle comes into view. He lifts the handle with all his might and the floor of the fireplace opens like a lid, revealing a stairway.

Mercè-san entrusts Ojou-sama's hand to me.

I firmly grasp the delicate hand wrapped in a silk glove.

Furthermore, I am presented with some escape funds wrapped in a leather bag.

"I'm sorry, but since we're pressed for time, I couldn't gather a significant amount. Even so, I've included some leftover confections from today's party in the bag. Please eat it on the road."

"… … Thank you very much. Mercè-san, please be safe, too."

For a moment, the words "Mercè-san should run away with us" were about to come out.

However, this would only serve to insult her.

Mercè-san's eyes show that she had made her resolve.

No matter what happened to herself, she intended to buy time for Ojou-sama's escape.

I urge Ojou-sama into the hidden passage.

At that point, her awareness finally caught up to reality for the first time.

"….. tsu!"

Ojou-sama sheds large pearl-like tears and refusesd to move.

She extends her delicate hands and grabs Mercè-san's cuffs.

She tries speaking, but her voice wouldn't come out as she shakes her head.

That she didn't want to be separated, that she didn't want to go — was what her whole body was conveying.

"Ojou-sama, time is of the essence. Please make haste."

"….. tsu!"

"Ojou-sama……"

"….. tsu!"

"Ojou-sama!!!"

"!?"

Mercè-san yells at Ojou-sama.

This is probably the first time she scolded Ojou-sama since she was hired as a maid.

Ojou-sama was frozen by her angry voice.

Mercè-san did a complete 180, and, with an expression filled with affection like that of an older sister or mother, loosened Ojou-sama's fingers that held her.

"For worrying about us, I am truly grateful. But no matter what becomes of us, as long as Ojou-sama is safe, then the bloodline of the Vlad house will not come to an end. So please continue living, no matter how tough life gets. Because Ojou-sama's safety is our sincere desire."

All the servants gathered in the dining hall nods to Mercè-san's words as if to say "my thoughts exactly".

Merry-san further adds on.

"Please leave the matter of the Master and Madam to us. We will save them even if it costs us our lives. Until then, please be safe, Ojou-sama. Now then, Lute, quickly take Ojou-sama to the hidden passage baa~."

"… … Yes. Ojou-sama, your hand please."

Though Ojou-sama still left traces of tears, she took my hand and walked toward the staircase leading to the hidden passage.

For the last time, she took one look back.

"Lute, I leave Ojou-sama to you."

Merry-san left behind those final words and closed the entrance.

A sound echoed as the hidden passage was concealed once more.

All light disappeared.

I concentrated magical power on my eyes and enhanced my night vision.

Leading Ojou-sama by the hand, I descended the stairs.

The hidden passage was an underground excavated tunnel.

Its height was such that a 160cm tall person would be able to touch its ceiling by reaching upwards.

As for its width, it's about as wide as 2 persons' armspan.

It was probably made using magic…

Owing to it not being used at all, the passage was very dusty.

“Ojou-sama, excuse me.”

I carried the still crying Ojou-sama and began to walk.

Ojou-sama buried her face on my neck and continued crying.

Warm teardrops wet my skin.

To save magical power, I didn’t use any on my arms or legs, and walked with my own power.

— it has probably been about 1 hour. The exit came into view.

Similar to the entrance, a staircase extended with an iron door covering it on its end.

In order to continue carrying Ojou-sama, I concentrated magical power on one arm as I opened the door slowly and while remaining vigilant.

“… … Is this a shed?”

Just like in the castle, the door was made under a hearth.

Still staying vigilant, I examined the surroundings.

The room is dark and shows no signs of life.

There were walls made of logs, some materials left in the corner, and some crude wooden desks, chairs and the like.

We entered the room and I let Ojou-sama sit on a chair.

“I am going to go check the situation outside for a bit, so please wait here for just a moment, Ojou-sama.”

“… … … …”

Without saying anything, Ojou-sama did as she was told and let go of

my hand.

I opened the door and went outside to check our surroundings.

We were in a forest.

Looking behind me, I saw that we were in a log cabin; it seems to be a rest stop.

The area surrounding the cabin was fairly open.

I opened a map in my mind.

Thinking of possible locations, there's none other than the forest behind the castle.

To confirm it, I climbed up a nearby tree.

Needless to say, I enhanced my physical ability using body strengthening.

I enhanced my vision to my limits while I was atop the tree.

I could barely make out the situation in the castle.

Smoke went up like beacons around the castle.

The maids and other servants were running in all directions carrying something that looked like a person wrapped in sheets.

Following that, some men from the main family's side gave chase on horned horses.

Since they don't know which is the real Ojou-sama, they'll be running around until they capture all the servants.

The servants were running on foot with all their might to shake off any pursuit, all just to buy us some time to escape.

Someone who seemed to be Mercè-san raised her hands toward a man.

“They… …”

I subconsciously grinded my teeth in vexation.

However, what I have to do now is not to go and help them.

Also so as to not waste everyone’s determination, I will take Ojou-sama to a safe location as quickly as possible.

I promptly descended the tree and returned to the cabin.

Ojou-sama was sitting on a chair while holding her knees, covering her face.

“Ojou-sama, this place is still a danger zone. Let’s move locations at once.”

“……”

Ojou-sama didn’t show any reaction.

I simply said “Excuse me” and carried her again.

Inside the dark forest, relying only on starlight, I began walking towards a town.

Looking back toward the castle, smoke continued rising even now.

Ojou-sama’s and my escape continued.

Chapter 036 – Ojousama's Decision

The port town which acts as the entrance to the Demon Continent.
This town is where the slave house is located, the one where I was sold to after being tricked by fake adventurers about a year ago.

I was surveying the streets while wearing hooded cloak.
A group of two blonde-haired young men appeared out of one of the inns.

It's not that they visited the inn because they wanted to stay, but in order to check on the inn's guests.
The other party were probably subordinates of the vampire clan's head.
The person they were looking for — is undoubtedly Chrisse Gate Vlad-ojousama.

Chrisse-ojousama and I arrived here by walking from the woods behind the castle at night.

I had judged that it's better for ojousama's safety that she did not stay in the Demon Continent, but to go to some other continent.

Half a day away by coach.
Taking neither rest nor sleep, but only short breaks in between, I arrived at the town after a day, carrying ojousama in my arms.
When we got hungry we took some snacks left over from Karen's surprise party.

Along the way, ojousama showed little reaction, and only hung her head.
Strange how in just one day the situation could become as different as heaven and earth.

We didn't go find an inn once we arrived in town, but instead headed for the [Rano Slave House] where Master once bought me.
As I feared, the enemy's hands are already working at the inn; and I barely managed to slip ojousama into the slave house.

After confirming the situation outside, I headed back to the slave

house.
I went to the back of the house, and made eye contact with the head of guards.

He was the man with a skinhead and a twisted horn growing out of his forehead — Obukhov.

The entrance to the basement at the back of the house was protected and barricaded by him and his men.
I exchanged greetings with them and went down the stairs to the basement.

The fifth day since we ran from the castle.

Ojousama and I were currently in hiding in the basement of Rano slave house.
We're hiding at the room in the basement where I lived about a year ago.

I believe the Vampire house's heads won't consider that we would be hiding in the basement of a slave house instead of an inn.

I slept in the vacant large room, but I had ojousama use a private room.

It's not like they were hiding us out of goodwill either.
It does come with meals, but they made us pay an exorbitant amount as lodging fees.
We managed to pay somehow with the precious metal objects gathered from ojousama's room.
But so long as we're able to pay we can rest at ease.

Because as long as we pay there would be no need for them to betray us.
If they were to sell us out to the Vampire house even after receiving payment from us, they would be instantly branded as untrustworthy by the upper class who has connections to ojousama—not to mention Master.
A merchant won't do something that would damage their credibility.

Without credibility one cannot do business—the words I heard a long time ago came back into mind.

I took the stairs from the basement to the top floor.
I headed for the reception room.

Inside the room there was “a leather sofa, a table made of insect shell, and a thick desk.”
There were no windows, but there were potted plants put in its stead and there was a scenic painting to dampen the stifling atmosphere.
There were also elegant furniture arranged in a well calculated manner.

There was a two-legged frog inside the room.
He was the owner of this Rano Slave House, Rano Merumeru.
He welcomed me with a friendly attitude completely unbefitting his appearance.

“Hiya Lute, how’s the town?”
“Guards are posted at the harbor and the inns and the town gates as usual. Nowadays they seem certain that we’re in this town so they’re running a thorough search. I wonder if they heard word about someone seeing me or something….”

When I looked at him he shrugged his shoulders.

“There’s only a few places where kids can go by walking from the Vlad house. Even I would expect you to head to another continent through this town. If you went to another harbor town they would have caught up with you after all. There’s just no way any of us would leak news about your presence”
“……I know, right.”

I tried baiting him, just in case.
I expected as much.
Which is why I hid in their blind spot and laid low in the basement of a slave house.

“Then, about the matter of smuggling us abroad, were you able to find a ship?”
“Of course, but there will naturally be a cost. You wanted to go to the Fairy-Human Continent, so for two people it will be about this much.”

“You must be kidding, right! No matter how much I work, I can’t pay

that kind of money for two people!”

The amount of money Rano cited was outrageous
You could build a small house with that kind of money

He stroked his frog head.

“Every continent is fussy about illegal immigrants nowadays. Besides, even if you say we’re helping the Vlad house, we’re still clearly making enemies of the Vampire house. For that I think this amount of money is appropriate, no?”

Despite his friendly tone and attitude he’s totally taking advantage of us.
As expected from a merchant who handles slaves.

But there’s just no way ojousama and I could just go out in the open and follow the normal procedures for getting into another continent.
I can already see us getting found by the Vampire house’s lackeys in the middle of doing that.

So, there’s no way other than something illegal like smuggling.

“If not the Fairy Human Continent, then I can get you to the neighboring Dragon Continent for this much.”
“Dragon Continent, huh……”

With a timing that seemed like he’d been aiming for it all along, Rano presented a compromise.
If it’s the Dragon Continent the money would barely be enough.

The continent next to the Demon Continent, the Dragon Continent.
It’s located where the number [4] was on a clockface.

If we were to cross the border and go to the Dragon Continent, it would lower the chances that the Vampire house could lay their hands on us.

(*If I go to the Dragon Continent and become an adventurer or do manual labor for money, I think I could manage to support ojousama…. Or*

maybe I could let ojousama go to the Fairy Human Continent by herself… nah.)

It's too reckless to send the former hikikomori ojousama, who is blind to the ways of the world, all alone to Hod town in the Aljio region where Elle-sensei lives.
There's a very high chance that she'll get tricked and get sold back to the Demon Continent as a slave like I was.
Then, if the head of the Vampire house were to buy ojousama as a slave, she'd be in a terrible state. Therefore, the plan to send ojousama alone to the Fairy Human Continent is rejected.

I told him what I'd carefully considered.

"….. well then, passage for two to the Dragon Continent, please."
"I'll arrange it as soon as the price is paid."
"As a service, please use the funds left over in our current account to cover the remaining fees."
"Well, if it's just that much…"

I finished the negotiations with Rano.
He put on a very merchant-like smile.

▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼

Rano and I went down the basement for a moment.
That was because I left ojousama in charge of the funds.

I knocked on the door to the room where she was.

"Excuse us."

Ojousama was sitting on the bed hugging her knees, with her face buried in her arms.

She had been feeling down like this ever since we slipped out of the mansion.
It wasn't unreasonable.
Not even one night had passed, and a fun surprise party had turned into her parents getting captured as prisoners.

The fact that she herself was being pursued didn't make things any better.
She didn't even have the time to calm her heart.

That she would eat her meals was a relief, at least.

"Ojousama, I'm sorry to disturb your rest. I wish to report our plans from now on."

In order to give ojousama some peace of mind, I explained my plans.
I told her that I was planning on the two of us going to the Dragon Continent.
Once we crossed the country's border, the Vampire main house certainly wouldn't come after us, and our safety can be guaranteed, I stressed.

I thought that with this, she would calm down a bit and I hope maybe she would cheer up

"For that reason I will need ojousama to release the funds you're holding…. will that be alright?"
"……"

However, Ojousama composedly tore up the plan I put forth.

Ojousama raised her face.
It's been a while since I've seen her face.

Her eyes was red from crying, her cheeks were a bit thin.
The color of her skin was bad, and her hair had also lost its sheen.
Her slim limbs looked like they had became thinner.

[I'm not going to the Dragon Continent]

Ojousama wrote in her usual mini blackboard, rejecting my proposal.

As a whole, she had became weaker.
It was a matter of course.
The little girl who had been raised with delicate care had suddenly been thrust into a situation where her future is uncertain. Of course she would

weaken.

And yet only the glint in ojousama's eyes did not become weak.
In fact it is shining, it's burning hotter than the sun.

Ojousama wrote on her mini blackboard.

[I'm not running away. Lute-oniichan, let's fight to save father and mother! Let's fight to the bitter end!]
"……..eh?"

Ojousama had shifted into a strange gear.

Chapter 037 – To the Dragon Continent

[I'm not running away. Lute-oniichan, fight with me and help father and mother out! Let's fight to the bitter end!]

Seeing my lack of response, Ojousama thrusted her mini blackboard at me again, as if making her point.
For a little girl who was bullied at school to the point of hiding herself at home and not coming out, to suggest something like fighting to the bitter end to save her parents…
I don't know whether to be happy at the growth of her spirit, or to lament her exceedingly reckless character that was just what you'd expect from master and madam's daughter.

Anyway, I should calm Ojousama down first.

"I understand Ojousama's feelings but saving master and madam is impossible with just the two of us"
[We won't know until we try!]
"We *do* know. Please consider our fighting power. Against the Vampire house with over 50 magicians, the two of us non-magicians would stand exactly zero chance of rescuing master."
Ojousama made a bitter face at my sound reasoning.
But she won't budge even an inch.

[Just like how Lute-oniichan defended your precious people from goblins, I also want to protect my precious people… my family!]

I already told her about how I defended children and my important person from goblins before.
As a result Ojousama gained an interest in practice, and part of the reason she was able to escape her hikikomori-ness .
I had never dreamed of it dragging me down like this now

Ojousama continued excitedly

[Then with the travel expenses to the Dragon Continent, buy the magic device oniichan told me about! The AK-47! Since you said it might

be able to injure father it must be an amazing magic device isn't it?]
"It is certainly powerful but…. But since it is a rare magic device it is not sold anywhere around here. We can't just buy it."
[Then let's go to where it's sold! Then we'll go to father and mother, Merry-san and Mercè-san — I'll go save my entire family!]

Ojousama excitedly, vigorously tightened her hand into a fist.

I never knew that Ojousama had this kind of belligerent character all along.
Ah, I shouldn't have told her about the AK-47 — I want to go back and beat up the me that thought it would be fine to tell her that day.

"I'm sorry, but is this [AK-47] Ojousan was talking about, the magic device that [uses explosion magic to fling a small bit of metal a distance away to wound and kill the enemy]?"

Unexpectedly, Rano interrupted my and Ojousama's conversation.
Moreover, from the way he speaks he seems to know the name of [AK-47]!
No way!?
How in this world did he get to know the name [AK-47]!?

He saw our reaction, and started speaking at his convenience.

"I wonder if the two of you know about the [Magic Stone Princess]."
"Magic Stone Princess?"

I tilted my head in doubt.
Ojousama, who at one time had walked the path of magic devices, started explaining.

[As a magician, she is a genius regarding magic devices. The [Rainbow Sword] that she made while she was schooling in the Dragon Continent University was a groundbreaking invention that overturned the conventional wisdom about magic stones.]

The Prism sword is — A sword that could change attributes by swapping over fire, water, wind, and other magic stones.

At that time, the established theory is that one can't swap over

attribute magic stones that had been implanted.
The Magic Stone Princess overturned that and made a magic sword that could swap over attribute magic stones.

Since then, she had been called the [Magic Stone Princess] by magic stone professionals.

“Recently she had been developing a [Focused Mana Charging Method] that could shorten the time to charge up magic stones from 30 days to 15 days, and raised her fame further.”

Ojousama heard Rano’s story and made an astonished expression.
As someone who had her eyes on magic devices, she would certainly understand how hard it is to shorten the charging time by half.

I pressed Rano for more

「それでその『魔石姫』の話と『ＡＫ４７』がどう繋がるんですか？」
“So what relation would this [Magic Stone Princess] have to the [AK-47]?”

“That person told merchants that she would pay any price asked for information about [Metal-flinging Magic Devices] [AK-47] and [M-10]. All the merchants got greedy and gathered news about those and objects that they think may be one of those to send to her, but mostly they got the wrong things and rather than reward, they received angry words in return.”

Somehow he seems to be troubled and caressed his head.

“I also tried collecting information, but somehow some other merchant seems to have seen a girl having something similar in the Fairy Human Continent Magic School. But no matter how much he tried to pay her she won’t let go of the [Metal-flinging Magic Device]. However, just the news of her seemed to have fetched quite a price.”

“Could it be that that Magic School Student’s name is [Snow]?”

“Yes yes. So you *do* know something. Would you care to tell me about her if you do? If you know something good about this Snow person we might be able to buy that thing off of her. If we could we’ll be well

rewarded you know. In fact, I could transport you two to the Fairy Human Continent for free. The reward money from the Magic Stone Princess would be more than enough to cover that cost after all."

"Know her? This "Snow person" is my fiancée.."
"F, fiancée! Is that true!?"

Rano made an astonished face at my answer.

[…. Lute-oniichan, has a fiancée?]
"Yes, she's my childhood friend from the orphanage we grew up in."

When she heard my answer Ojousama's battle fever from before died out for some reason, and she tightly held her chest, with her eyes downcast.

As I tried to talk to Ojousama, I was cut off by Rano's agitated questioning

"If what Lute said is true, then I'm a very lucky person! If I brought Lute to the Magic Stone Princess she's going to reward me well!"
"Oh, I'm very sure she'd be willing to pay even more."

I denied Rano's monologue.

"After all, that [Metal-flinging Magic Device] was made by me."

With that, it was decided where Ojousama and I would go.
To the Dragon Continent where the Magic Stone Princess lives—.

Chapter 038 – Magic Stone Princess – First Part

The Dragonian Kingdom that governs the Dragon Continent.
Among the 5 races, the dragon race is the one and only race that lives here.

Completely contrary to the demon race; there are absolutely no other races.

It's because they're so proud of their own race that they're known as the one race with the highest pride among the 5 races.

And in that Dragon Continent, there is an extremely famous person: the magic tool inventor, Meiya Dragoon.

At 3 years old, Meiya could speak and write in multiple languages, as well as learned all sorts of mathematical binary functions.
She also had talent as a magician, having reached B-minus rank at the age of 15.
When she entered the magic tool department in a magic university, she skipped grades and graduated within a year.
At that time, she invented the Rainbow Sword.

In those days, it was believed to be impossible for one weapon to switch between multiple types of magic stones.
However, by combining various metals and magical inscriptions, she made it possible.

Due to this invention, this discovery, her name spread worldwide.
Since then, she had become known as the "Magic Stone Princess" to many.

Meiya's pride was, even among the dragon race, exceptionally high.
Nevertheless, the extent of her resourcefulness, beauty, status, prestige and wealth garnered looks of admiration from the populace of the Dragon Continent.

If limited to within the Dragon Continent she is as famous as the King himself.

There are even rumors of Meiya being in a relationship with the Dragonian Kingdom's first prince.
Speaking of the prince, his ability as a magician is certain and he wears a well-mannered, skillful mask. However, there is a facet of him that tends to somewhat go out of control. Nevertheless, he is popular with the people.

Since Meiya's parents were influential nobles, the two were actually childhood friends who've known each other since they were very young.
But the truth about the rumors is that it's simply the first prince's unrequited feelings.

One day, the publicly acknowledged genius Meiya, came across a curious item.
The S&W M10 revolver and a box of .38 Special rounds .

Meiya was in her estate's parlour listening to the merchant who brought it.
According to the merchant — it would seem that it was a "a miraculous magic tool seemingly created by a heavenly god".

Even dexterous craftsmen from the dwarves couldn't manufacture such an elaborate thing, or so the merchant asserted.

And exactly because it's such a magnificent magic tool, he first and foremost brought it to the world's best magic tool inventor: Meiya — the merchant flattered as such.

(You only brought it to me, a known magic tool dilettante, since you thought you could rip me off, anyways… since you would only get a paltry sum from those nobles in the magic schools who strikes a hard bargain.)

However, though she was a dilettante, she's no mere amateur.
She's a publicly acknowledged genius in magic tool development.
Did he really think herself willing to buy inferior magic tools?

Meiya scoffed at the merchant's sales pitch and crossed her legs.

However, without noticing the scornful look in Meiya's eyes, the merchant moved to the garden to demonstrate the ability of the S&W M10 revolver.

With a memo with its name and usage instructions in one hand, the merchant started explaining its functions.

The merchant shot a previously prepared brick from about 5 meters away.
Splendidly, the bullet smashed the brick.
The merchant continuously destroyed bricks one brick after another.

Arms crossed and being waited upon by a guard-cum-servant, Meiya who was watching in an arrogant attitude was surprised by the S&W M10's power, performance, rapid-fire capability, and so on, becoming unable to stand up on the spot due to collapsing from the shock.

All the maids on the scene rushed to her.

Though Meiya was still frozen on the spot, unable to stand for such a magnificent magic tool, she immediately made the purchase without questioning the merchant's unreasonable price.
Furthermore, she wanted to buy any other goods of the same series that the merchant has for sale, as well as any information on its creator.

According to the merchant, there is one other similar magic tool, but he couldn't come to an agreement with the person who brought it about the price, so it seems it was brought to some other merchant.

Meiya was–

"Money isn't an issue. Find the other similar magic tool and gather information on its creator at once!"

The merchant received payment for the revolver and rushed out of the Meiya estate in a hurry.

While Meiya was waiting for the similar magic tool and information on its creator, she immediately researched the revolver in her workshop.

First, with the memo that came with it in one hand, she confirmed its name.

The small metal pipes in the S&W M10 revolver seems to called .38

Special cartridges.

The 6 cartridge rounds are loaded in holes in the part called a cylinder. Below that is a part called a trigger; it seems bullets fly out when it is pulled.

It seems to be made of magic liquid metal that's harvested by killing metal slimes.

"To be able to create such a divine magic tool using that good-for-nothing magic tool….."

Knowing the material its made from surprised her even more.

Continuing her research — there were too many astonishing points: the cylinder that internally shifts whenever the trigger is pulled, small parts that cannot possibly be made with our present level of metallurgy, the means in which grooves were carved into the interiors, etc.

"This cartridge is a splendid item, as well."

She examined the empty cartridge in detail.

It appears that explosion magic is sealed within these small pipes, activated by the trigger and hammer operating together conferring a strong impetus to its rim.
Then, the mechanism is such that the small piece of metal inside the pipe would be propelled out — she determined as such.

To produce such a magic tool that uses so little to achieve maximum efficacy… the person who made this is a genius above even me!

Meiya Dragoon, who was exceptionally prideful even amongst the prideful dragon race, recognized the creator of the S&W M10 as a genius without a hint of hesitation.

If someone who knew her were there, they would probably faint while foaming at the mouth at the overwhelmingly shocking scene.
She was that prideful.

Without delay, Meiya ordered some magic liquid metal and tried to reproduce an S&W M10 herself.
However…

"… … this isn't going well at all. Was the S&W M10 really made of this stuff, I wonder?"

On the very same day that Meiya got her hands on the magic liquid metal, she started shutting herself in one of her home's workshops to try and begin production, but she was completely unable to make progress.

In the first place, 'magic liquid metal' is an item obtained by defeating the monster known as metal slime.

Magic liquid metal is a special metal with a unique characteristic that if one touches it while imagining a weapon and pumps magic into it it will take the shape of said weapon.

It has the merit of being easy to carry around in small quantities.
For that reason, it's a magic tool favored by assassins.

Its demerit is that once it's fixed into a certain form, it cannot revert back into its liquid form.
Without a clear image if you made a sword, it would be blunt; armor would have uneven thickness, and even its size would be wrong.
It is only situationally useful; difficult to handle; being a magic tool, expensive.
An item that has become synonymous with the words 'unpopular commodity'.

Meiya's judgment is that it's something that she can't help but hesitate to even call it a magic tool.

Magic liquid metal is so unpopular that nobody conducts research on it. As such, using magic liquid metal, how such strength was achieved; how such elaborate parts were produced; and how grooves were engraved in the tube's interior… she was frankly unable to comprehend.

Meiya temporarily paused production using magic liquid metal.
With a different approach, she was going to once again try producing an

S&W M10.

She requested a skilled dwarf engineer, whom she is the patron of, to make the iron tubes.
She decided to try using a rod to forcibly shave off interior grooves in the pipes in post-production.

The S&W M10's structure is complex, but the underlying concept is simple.
It was simply explosion magic propelling a piece of metal inside a tube.

Although she couldn't really understand how the cartridges' explosion magic could be activated just from getting struck by the hammer… … …
Even though she couldn't find traces of any special magic being applied on the hammer…

Prototype #1 was completed before long.

It had the appearance of a short metal tube. Wood was attached beneath it for support.
Given that she didn't know how the hammer activated the explosion magic in the cartridge, the butt of the tube was made to be openable courtesy of a metal lid.
A small piece of magic stone was installed and magical inscriptions were engraved in this breech.

It's set up so that if one were to chant the preset incantation while touching the breech, the explosion magic charged into the magic stone would activate.

A metal ball loaded through the muzzle is used as ammunition.
It was properly made to be the same shape as the bullets used for the S&W M10.

Meiya had thought of the possibility of an accident happening, so she fixed Prototype #1 onto an apparatus she prepared on the courtyard.
About 2 meters ahead, a brick had been placed as a target.

Without delay, she crammed a bullet into the muzzle.

“Hmmm, looks like the size doesn’t fit. Bring me a different one.”

As per Meiya’s instructions, a maid brought out several bullets spread out on a tray.
On top of the tray was a cushion, and the bullets were placed on top of that so as to not let them roll around.

Eventually, after the third prototype, she used a rod to cram a bullet in.
The magic stone was already charged with explosion magic.

Meiya attached a metal thread which could transmit magical power onto the breech, and took a distance of approximately 5 meters.
By forcing magical power through the metal thread, it would be as if she was touching the metal lid directly.

Once everything was set up, Meiya gleefully chanted the incantation.

“Explode!”

BOOM!

“Kyaa!?”

Prototype #1’s body literally exploded.

“Meiya-sama! Are you safe!?”
“Uh, yes, I’m all right”

For the second time, the maids gathered around Meiya who was on her behind, unable to stand due to surprise.

Meiya borrowed their hand to stand up, and approached the spot where the now-exploded Prototype #1 was placed.

The tube’s body exploded from its base.
The metal bits were torn into long thin slices.
The magic stone affixed onto the lid was also smashed.

Somehow or other, the explosion magic was released in an airtight condition. The magic stone couldn’t handle the shock and became

damaged, causing the stockpiled magical power within it to be released.
As a result of the explosion magic combined with the magic stone's power running wild; the tube's body couldn't handle the strain, became damaged, and things went to shit.

"For me of all people to… … even though it's something so obvious if I had just given it some thought."

Furthermore, adding insult to injury, the fired bullet was found in a completely different direction from the target.
The brick target wasn't even grazed in the slightest.

The rifling marks on the bullet were distorted halfway.
It's probably because the internal grooves were crooked.
As a result, the bullet did not fly straight.

With regard to the grooves… "in adding rotation to the bullet, it would stabilize its flight". Meiya raised such a hypothesis.
It followed the same principles as fletchings on arrows.

She had thought that it was an important part which was needed to gyroscopically stabilize the bullet, so she made it carefully. But the result was this sad sight.

However, she had no intention of blaming the dwarf who she had requested to produce it.
After all, for a first prototype, she had made rash demands such as digging out grooves inside the metal pipe…

"What I understood from actually trying to make prototype models…… the only I understood is that this S&W M10 is truly an extraordinary magic tool."

For argument's sake, let's assume that the Prototype #1 Meiya made was put to practical use.
Even supposing the main body could withstand the explosion magic, the damage to the magic stone couldn't be prevented.
For a magic stone of that size, depending on quality, it would cost about 1 – 5 silver coins (10,000 – 50,000 Japanese Yen) per stone.

To use magic stones as disposables on a magic tool that can't even accurately hit a target from 2 meters away is insane.

And yet, without using magic stones, the S&W M10 could fire multiple shots in succession, and with excellent accuracy, to boot.
Completely unable to understand how it was made, Meiya was at her wits' end for a while.

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Several months after purchasing the S&W M10, and after failing in researching on reproducing it, the merchant who sold the revolver came bringing a similar magic tool and information on the creator.

Same as last time, they were in the parlour.
The merchant respectfully places a tube that was bigger and longer than the revolver.

Apparently, this magic tool was called an "AK-47".

Meiya didn't even bother haggling and bought the AK-47 and the information on its creator with at the merchant's asking price.

The first thing she did after the merchant left was look at the papers holding information on the creator.

The S&W M10 and AK-47's creator's name is Lute.
Raised in an orphanage in Hod of the Aljio region in the Fairy Human Continent.

It seems the merchant got lucky and came across and asked a former resident of Hod.

Lute had been a genius since he was in the orphanage, having learned to speak, read & write as well as basic arithmetic at the age of 3.
At 5 years old, he developed toys such as Reversi and sold the rights to it to a merchant. With the funds procured from that, he set aside a part of it to buy magic liquid metal for the development of the S&W M10 and AK-47.

At 10 years old, he graduated from the orphanage.

After taking a Level II quest as an adventurer, it is likely that he died fighting against a monster.
There was no corpse, not even bones. Suspected that it was already eaten by a monster.

"This can't be… To think the creator is already dead."

Meiya was dejected.
For the holder of such talent to die at the age of 10… for such a thing to have happened…
How could the gods do such a cruel thing?

Next, she performed some test firing with the newly bought AK-47.

Same as last time, she went to the courtyard.
The maids placed down some bricks to be targets.

Meanwhile, Meiya looked over the instructions for the AK-47.
It would seem that it was a magic tool made to be able to shoot more bullets than the revolver.

"Certainly, it makes sense…"

After shooting six shots with the revolver, one would have to take out the cartridges from the cylinder and reload it.
However, the AK-47 had something called a "magazine" which was loaded with 30 shots. Also, it seems that reloading could be done simply by replacing the magazine.

Meiya understood that, with this, one could fire a lot of bullets like those from the revolver; but with a much higher capacity.

Since preparations for the brick targets were done, test firing was about to begin.
"Full automatic", which according to the memo was for firing a large number of bullets

"Here goes nothing."

She grasped the grip without pressing the stock against her shoulder,

and fired while just holding onto the checker ring.

"Kyaaa!?"

Surprised by the recoil from the 7.62mm x Russian shots, she was once again on her behind due the full automatic's rapid-fire.
She lost her grip on the AK-47 and it tumbled onto the ground.

Meiya turned pale.
Because she imagined that the bullets would shoot out the same way as with the revolver, the AK-47's full auto completely took her by surprise.
She was, once again, clueless as to its structure that allowed it to fire so quickly in succession.

It was even less comprehensible than the S&W M10's structure.

In the first place, the concept of such a magic tool didn't exist in this world.
That's why she was all the more confused.

(This alien-like magic tool design orientation was created by a mere 5-year-old child!? Th.. That's impossible!)

However, the real thing was right before her eyes.
Meiya looked at the AK-47 as if it were a cursed magic tool created by a devil king.

But even more than the unpleasant thought, the realization that her talents could never match up to Lute, the genius who created this magic tool, was painfully clear.

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Ever since the day when she test-fired the AK-47, Meiya's was greatly wounded and she drowned herself in alcohol in order to escape from reality .

Scattered around the bed in her room was a large quantity of wines, spirits, liqueur, and the like.

“There’s no more alcohol… Quick, bring me more alcohol…”
“Me, Meiya-sama… any more than is bad for your health.”

“Tsu! Me, to that inventor! Are you saying I’m inferior to Lute!?”
”Hii!”

Meiya threw an empty alcohol bottle at the servant.
Since she was drunk, her aim was a mess and the bottle smashed into the wall.

The maid ran out of the room with a pale face.

“Ri, right away ma’am!”
“… hmph.”

While waiting for the maid to bring back some alcohol, Meiya collapsed onto the bed.
When the maid came back with alcohol, she snatched it away.

“Gulp, gulp”

With alcohol in hand, she forced practically all of it down her throat, some of it spilling.

And thus, she continued spending her days mostly drinking alcohol.

Not just the maids, but also people from outside the mansion were despondent for Meiya.
She was no longer the genius magic tool inventor that they knew.

“Past the age of 20, you are just another person”. While this parallel world didn’t have such a saying, but nobody doubted that her talent had withered.

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One morning, such as she was, a revelation came… she came to realize the reason she was born into this world.

She realized that with the limited talent she was endowed with, her

role was to make sure that the name and great exploits of the true genius who created the S&W M10 and AK-47 would be known by future generations .

Once she realized that, she was quick to act.
She ordered a maid to clean up her room and prepare a hot bath.

Dipping her body in steaming hot bath water washed away any alcohol left in her body.

She brought the S&W M10 and AK-47 to her workshop and immediately started her research.

She started her analysis of the S&W M10 and AK-47's structure anew.

Since the revolver's basic structure is quite simple, making a replica shouldn't be impossible.
The problem is the AK-47.
Even now, she couldn't understand the principle behind its ability to fire so many bullets so quickly.

Even though she would like to disassemble the AK-47, it would be troubling if it turns out she couldn't reassemble it.
Now that God Lute, the true genius, is dead; another AK-47 will never appear again in this world.

Before starting on the actual thing, she decided to start off her research on the cartridges.
If she could only understand how the explosion magic charged inside the cartridge was activated by the hammer, the need to use magic stones as disposables would disappear.

Thus, she restarted her observations on an empty cartridge.

Explosion magic is sealed up inside a small pipe; when its butt is stimulated, a small piece of metal flies out.
A concept that didn't exist until now.
Furthermore, its power was at a level where it could easily kill.

For example, if it comes to be that mass-production of AK-47s and cartridges is possible, even non-magicians could overthrow a country if they got hold of it.
The existence of the magic tool created by God Lute once again sent shivers down her spine.

"It seems that this sealed space is an important part of the cartridge, huh…"

By causing an explosion within the sealed space, it maintains the impact's directivity and thus, it attains its propulsive force.
It's by maintaining that directivity that the piece of metal can sublimate to a level where it can kill creatures.

It's a new concept where one maintains directivity on scattered energy.

She still didn't know the method in which the hammer activated the explosion magic within the cartridge, but…

"… … I wonder if this concept can't be applied using magic stones."

Truly a train of thought befitting the Magic Stone Princess.

As a result, she started dedicating half her research time trying to establish a means to incorporate magical power through magic stones… she called it the [Focused Mana Charging Method].

Putting a magic stone inside the metal tube, she held up both hands.
The mouth of the tube was widened, and it became narrower to its butt. It looked like a funnel.
The interior's surface was smeared with a special chemical that perfectly reflects magical power.
Thanks to that, when magical power is transmitted, the amount that leaks without being absorbed by the magic stone is drastically reduced.

Magical tool inventors everywhere praised Meiya for this innovation that overshadowed the rainbow sword that she invented in the magic university.

The people who propagated the rumor that “Meiya’s talents had withered” all quieted down.
And people lionized her, saying “Meiya Dragoon is the greatest magic tool inventor in history”.

However, it was impossible for Meiya to be sincerely pleased with that evaluation.
She had simply stolen the idea from the true genius, the god, Lute.

Also, at the same time she was conducting analysis on the S&W M10 and AK-47, she was collecting information.
She had asked the merchant who brought her the S&W M10 and AK-47, as well as other merchants, to search for similar items in the world.

She recruited help in collecting information without minding the costs.

However, having caught hold of such talk, sly merchants and vice individuals swarmed toward Meiya as ants toward sugar.
Needless to say, the information and goods they brought were all fake.

Though they were counterfeits that simply imitated outward appearance, the resemblance was disgustingly uncanny, so she had her hopes up. However, she was able to immediately tell they were fakes as soon as she picked them up.

Such days of parsing through a large amount of jumbled information continued, until one day a plausible piece of information came.

Someone who grew up in the same orphanage as Lute… of the Beast race’s White Wolf tribe, a girl named Snow apparently owned a magic tool similar to the S&W M10 revolver.
It was said that she was studying in a magic school in the Fairy Human Continent at the moment.

According to the merchant who brought in the information, he approached her to try and buy the magic tool, but he wasn’t even given the time of day.
So he visited Meiya in the hopes that she would at least buy this information for a high price.
Naturally, she only paid the merchant as much the price for the

information.

Meiya instantly made up her mind to go to the Fairy Human Continent to visit the aforementioned magic school.
However, a one-way trip from the Dragon Continent to the Fairy Human Continent would take at least half a year by ship.
A round-trip would take approximately one year.

But she was one of the few people in the world who owned a private airship.

Her private airship looked visually like a regular ship, but it used a large quantity of magic stones to float.
With this, even a trip that would usually take half a year could be completed in approximately one short month.

Without delay, in order for her to meet and directly negotiate with Snow, Meiya set her sights on a certain magic school in the Fairy Human Continent.

Chapter 039 – Magic Stone Princess – Last Part

"Magic Stone Princess" — Meiya, a magician from the Dragon Continent, finally arrived at the magic school in the Fairy Human Continent after a bit more than a month.

She was staying in a certain town close to the magic school.
Naturally, it was at the most expensive inn's most spacious room.

She was going to go to the magic school from the town by coach.

Due to its nature, magic schools were built on wide open spaces.
There were regulations against building private houses on its periphery.

It was to avoid causing damage to the surrounding area during the training of magic.

This magic school was made of stone like a fortress with student accommodation built around it.
Furthermore, its circumference was enclosed by two-layered walls.

While it was also made to defend from external effects, but its main purpose is to defend against magic attacks from inside.

Meiya's coach stopped at an established guard station on the outer wall.
The driver of the rented coach got into a fight with the guard.
It seems like since they came without a letter of introduction, they couldn't go in… so refused the guard.

The driver who was hired on-site pointed toward the coach and asked the guard to talk directly with his employer.
With a troubled expression, the guard knocked on the coach door.

The maid who came along to take care of Meiya was about to deal with the situation, but was stopped by Meiya.
It seems Meiya intended to personally talk with the guard.

The maid respectfully opened the door.

The guard inquired while scratching his head:

“Uhh… I’m sorry, but it’s the rules that unless you’ve made arrangements to meet a family member or otherwise own a permit, I can’t let you in. If it’s acceptable, could you schedule an appointment and come again at a later date?”

The guard spoke in a businesslike manner.
That attitude annoyed Meiya.
Even though it wasn’t on purpose, his speech was inappropriate considering he was talking to this Meiya, the world-famous genius.

She ordered the guard at point blank range.

“Tell the headmaster that Meiya Dragoon has come. He will understand with just that.”
“Me… Meiya Dragoon…!? You are the Magic Stone Princess!?”

It seems he was not a guard for nothing. He even knew her name.

A complete change from his earlier businesslike attitude, he stood at attention and his voice was shaking.

“I, I am terribly sorry. I will set up comms with the headmaster at once, so please wait just a moment.”
“Make it quick.”
“Yes! Right away!”

The guard went back into the station for a short moment, left a message to his colleagues who were on standby, and ran off to the school.

It took about 30 minutes before the guard returned to the coach.

”I, I’m terribly sorry to have kept you waiting! Since the headmaster is currently absent, the principal will be taking his place in receiving you, so please proceed toward the front entrance.”
“Thanks for the trouble.”

After saying those few words, Meiya started moving again on her coach.
Passing through the outer and inner wall, she finally arrived at the front entrance.

There, a teacher was already waiting for her.
It was a balding man who seemed to be very nervous.
He stood at attention as he greeted Meiya's coach.

When Meiya got off the coach, he bowed with a smile while sweating profusely.

"It is an honor to meet you, Meiya Dragoon-sama. I am the teacher in charge of teaching classes on magic tools here. I am Kahlua of the human race."
"Nice to meet you, Kahlua-san. I apologize for the sudden visit."
"Not at all. To be able to meet Meiya-sama, the famed magic tool inventor, is a great honor… Now then, speaking while standing here must be uncomfortable. Please, come in."

When Meiya and her maid entered the school building, they were shown into a parlour.
Inside the room, there was a leather sofa, a table made of insect carapace, flowers arranged in vases, and the walls were lined with paintings. The view from the window isn't that magnificent since this was the first floor, though. It was an exceedingly ordinary parlour.

A woman who seemed to be a human race office staff brought some roasted fragrant tea.
When she went out of the room, Kahlua proceeded to talk business while wiping off his sweat with a handkerchief.

"So to what do we owe this honor on this day?"
"I've come to meet with a student here, Snow-san, a girl from the Beast race's White Wolf tribe. Would it be possible to call her over?"
"S.. Snow-san!? What did she do this time!?"
"This time?"

Meiya reflexively inquired in response to Kahlua's agitation.
While wiping off his even more abundant amount of sweat, he flusteredly

explained.

"She is an excellent student… perhaps too excellent. As it is, she's often gets involved with trouble. Completely overwhelmng 100 soldiers from a freshman's private army; counterattacking upper class aristocratic men who approached her; single-handedly crushing adventurers who were, for some reason, hired by a merchant… ju, just remembering it all makes my stomach…"
"Oh my… these merchants certainly exist… how rude of them."

Meiya nonchalantly offered her sympathies
No matter how you slice it, that last merchant was definitely one of the people who acted because of her request.

"I understand what you're saying. However, there is something that I simply must talk to Snow-san about. So could you please call her over now?"
"I… I understand. Though I think she's probably in class right now, I'll call her over right now."

Kahlua left his seat and left the parlour at a brisk pace.
Meiya and her maid waited for roughly 10 minutes.

The sound of a knock.
After Kahlua, one female student showed up.

Lily-white skin, large pupils, and eyelashes long enough to be a shadow.
Her long silver hair was held up in a ponytail, and similarly colored wolf ears sometimes slightly moved.
She was a charmer who was beautiful like a spirit of the snow, yet also cute at the same time.

A metal bracelet she wore on her left arm reflected the sunlight coming in through the window.

But what was most eye-catching were the huge breasts that this magic school student was showing, which couldn't be hidden even by a mantle.
A beautiful cute charmer, yet also the owner of huge breasts; this unbalance probably tickles male instincts.

Even the upper class aristocratic male students, who were not want for women, would want to court her.

With her right hand on her chest and left hand just barely lifting her skirt, Snow bowed her head.
A prim and proper salutation.

“Greetings, Meiya-sama. I am Snow of the Beast race’s White Wolf tribe.”
“My apologies for calling you while you were busy. Please have a seat, Snow-san.”
“Excuse me.”

Snow sat across from Meiya.
Her teacher, Kahlua, sat down next to her.

“Since I dislike pointless courtesies, I will get straight to the point. Could you please hand over the magic tool you have in your possession? Of course, I am willing to offer a reasonable sum as remuneration.”
“Magic tool…..?”

Snow openly sighed when she realized what Meiya meant.

“Dragoon-sama, too? Recently, I’ve been bothered by the many people who came wanting me to sell them the magic tool that Lute-kun made. It’s something that is very precious to me, so I won’t sell it no matter how much you offer.”
“About that, please, I beg you! I’m willing to pay any amount!”
“There’s no room for negotiation. If that’s all, then please excuse me.”
“Please wait!”

In a panic, Meiya pursued Snow who left her seat.
However, as the “Magic Stone Princess”, she did not know restraint and left the room.
Touching upon her pride, her tongue unintentional slipped.

“Lute-sama was eaten by a monster and is already dead!”

Snow’s feet were frozen.

Meiya's mouth didn't stop.

"That's why, that magic tool isn't something someone like you who doesn't even know its value should own. To leave behind those achievements for the future, someone like me should — huh!?"

Snow turned around, and, at the same time, pressed the S&W M10 2-inch's muzzle onto Meiya's forehead.

Meiya couldn't perceive Snow's movements as she drew her revolver at all.
As she turned around, before anyone noticed, Meiya was already held at gunpoint… only its result remained.

"Lute-kun is dead? Stop lying. That Lute-kun couldn't possibly have been killed by a monster. Why would you tell such a lie…?"

Emitting undeniable bloodlust, Snow cocked the percussion hammer.

Ironically, that showed that it was different from the counterfeits that was brought to her so far.
However, Meiya, who understood what the raised hammer meant, let out a small "Hiii" sound.

A period that felt like an eternity… … though it was actually only roughly 10 seconds before Snow uncocked the hammer and re-placed the gun underneath her mantle.

"Excuse me."

She bowed politely and left the parlour.

Meiya who had just narrowly escaped death fell on her knees right there.

"Meiya-sama!?"
"Princess!"

Kahlua and the maid who were left behind rushed over in a panic to Meiya who was sitting on the floor.

Tears of fear had formed in her eyes.

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"Annoying! Annoying! Annoying! I definitely won't forgive that woman!"

Meiya rode her airship for a bit more than a month to get back home. However, her anger toward Snow did not settle at all.

She is the world-famous Meiya Dragoon.
The Dragon race were very prideful, but she was even more prideful.

Grumbling in her own bed, she scattered about in frustration while holding her pillow.
Sitting up, an evil face was reflected.

"I wonder how I should snatch away that revolver…… Should I make necessary preparations behind the scene and put pressure on the magic association and magic school? Or perhaps I should hire a first-rate thief to steal it, then….."

While she was considering a few ideas, knocking sounds resounded.
A maid entered when she called out.

"Excuse me. A merchant is here claiming to have brought Lute, the one who made those magic tools. What should I do?"
"…. Sigh. Another one."

Even though the increase in the number of merchants who visit her was caused by her own request for information and goods… there has been two merchants who intrude on her to try and swindle her in the past.
They brought a child slaves of fitting characteristics, claiming them to be the magic tool's creator, Lute, and trying to wangle out a reward money.

However, since the children they brought couldn't make an S&M or AK-47 when given magic liquid metal, they were seen through before long.

Meiya asked her childhood friend, the Dragonian Kingdom's first prince, to throw both swindling merchants into jail on the account of

attempted fraud.

Such a stupid trick wouldn't work; it was a threat as such towards other merchants.

Yet this is already the third time.
Another fool who doesn't learn has come.

"….. Since they've come all this way, I'll meet them to distract myself. Bring them to the parlour."
"As you wish."

The maid bowed and returned to meet the merchant and his companions.
Prey for Meiya to relieve her stress on came at just the right time, and she stood up from her bed with a twisted smile on her face.

While Meiya was changing and fixing her appearance with the help of a maid, the merchant and his companions were made to wait in the parlour.

Only the merchant was sitting on the sofa. A blond girl and black-haired boy was standing behind him for some reason.

Meiya had two male servants holding long spears and following her from behind as she made an appearance in the parlour.
With a pompous attitude as if she were the queen, she sat down on the main sofa.

"It is nice to meet you, Meiya-sama. I am a slave dealer working for the Rano Slave House. It is to my understanding that Meiya-sama is currently showing interest in a certain magic tool. As a matter of fact, one of the slaves we are dealing with happens to be its creator, so I brought him over."

The merchant introduced the black-haired boy standing behind him.
Needless to say, his name was Lute.

The blonde girl beside him was Chrisse Gate Vlad, a vampire of the Demon race.
The girl kept shifting her eyes with a frightened expression as she hid

behind Lute.

Meiya's eyes were captivated by that girl… by Chrisse.
The girl's attire, hair, and so forth were all dirty from her long journey, but overall was still as lovely as a doll. It made Meiya want to keep her as a pet. Meiya unintentionally licked her lips.

And then, the black-haired child who claimed to be Lute spoke of the circumstances that led to his becoming a slave.

The S&W and AK-47 were taken away from him when he was deceived by some fake adventurers, and he was then sold as a slave. The proof of that is the mark of slavery tattooed onto his arm.
At present, he had been bought for Chrisse by her father and serves as her blood bag-cum-butler… and so his explanation went.

Meiya was impressed.
Their setting was detailed, and the story was told with such zealousness. A very realistic performance.
If this was the first time she heard such a story, she may have believed it.

Meiya recrossed her legs and slackened her lips in provocation.

"I see, I understand. If he really is Lute, then he should be able to answer any questions regarding the S&W and AK-47, right? If, for example, he's a fake, then…"

The two men behind Meiya struck the floor with their spears threateningly.
Startled, Chrisse trembled like a small animal.
The black-haired boy agreed while covering her behind his back.

"That's fine by me. I will answer any question."

"Then it's decided. The first…. do you know what the S&W and AK-47 are made of?"
"Magic liquid metal obtained from metal slimes."
"Correct…"

"Tell me the name of the ammunition used by the S&W and AK-47."

“9mm .38 Special rounds and 7.62mm x Russian shots.”
“Correct.”

Up to this point, he had simply answered according to the memo written by “Lute” on how to handle the magic tools.
メイヤは足を組み直す。
Meiya recrossed her legs again.

“Then, next, could you confirm the current conditions of the S&W and AK-47? Of course, if you are their creator, then it shouldn’t be a problem, right?”
“Yes, that’s all right.”

The black-haired boy answered in no time.
”It seems he has quite the confidence to try and fool me,” Meiya muttered in her heart.

Meiya told a maid to bring the S&W and AK-47 from her workshop.

The S&W and AK-47 were placed on the table.
しかしこれからはメイヤを騙すためだけに、他の商人が持ち込んだ真っ赤な偽物。
However, this is the point where the other fakes who had tried to deceive Meiya met their downfall.
持ち主ならすぐに分かるはずだ。
The real thing would’ve immediately understood.

He, who is a fake, would probably just vaguely touch around and say that there were no problems.
At that time, Meiya would reveal that the thing in his hands was an imitation.
Imagining the bewildered expression he’ll have on his face then made her float an evil smile.

“Now then, it’s fine to not restrain yourself and pick them up.”
“Then please excuse me.”

The boy separated from Chrisse who was behind him, squat down beside the table, and picked up and analyzed the S&W and AK-47.

"…… These are fakes. The cylinder is firmly fixed in place, and the barrel's rifling isn't there. The AK is also off. It's too light, and the trigger can't be moved. The magazine, too, is stuck and can't be taken off…… Uh, could it be that you don't actually have the real S&W and AK-47?"

"…… huh?"

Meiya was speechless.

She felt it… her very soul was trembling.

"C, c, c, c, c, could it be… t, th, th, the real Lute-kamisama ?"

Lute agreed while being startled by her barely chewed out stuttered words.

"Yes, that's so, but…. is there a problem?"
"I've been wanting to meet you! Kami-sama !"

Meiya blew off the sofa with vigor and went on her knees at Lute's feet.
Taking his hand, she kissed it over and over and over again, and finally, she even kissed his feet.

"Wha!? Pl, please stop it! It tickles!"

Apart from Lute who was showing his resistance, everyone else was frozen stiff, unable to react at this sudden turn of events.

Being deeply moved and excited, Meiya turned around to face the slave dealer with a flushed smile filled with delight.

"How much is Kamisama!? I'll buy him at the asking price!"
"Uh, well… as we explained earlier, Lute is her… Chrisse-ojousan's slave."
"Oh, right, there was something like that!"

Meiya edged up to Chrisse and started negotiations.

"I beg you, Chrisse-san! Sell Kamisama to me! I'll pay ten times the

price you paid for him! No, I'll pay 100 times the amount!"

However, even though ojou-sama was shaking fearfully, she strongly shook her head.
She wrote on her mini-blackboard and thrust it toward Meiya.

[It's impossible for me to sell off Lute-oniichan… to sell off family. I don't want to lose anyone anymore….]
"Ojou-sama… …"

Chrisse's words struck Lute at his heart and deeply moved him.
He cleared his throat to change the mood, and started negotiations with Meiya.

"To be honest, we have a favor to ask of Meiya Dragoon-sama. For that reason, I would like to explain our circumstances. It may be a bit long, but… will that be fine?"
"In that case, by all means, stay at my house today! Moreover, it's almost time for dinner, so allow me to arrange a meal! Ah, before that, you must be tired from your journey. Your garments also seem to be worn out. If it pleases you, would you like to take a bath to heal from the fatigue? I will also prepare a change of clothes!"

Her breathing rough, Meiya excitedly urged Lute with peremptory force.
It took all he had to simply say, "O.. ok. Thank you for the hospitality."

Meiya handed over the promised reward to the merchant from the Rano Slave House and gleefully took Lute and Chrisse to her residence.

Chapter 040 – Vlad House, Signal of Counterattack!

Lute, 12 years old.

The young lady and I are safe; we were able to obtain accommodation in Meiya Dragoon's estate.
Though it was a slightly different reaction from what I had expected, but if we are welcome then there shouldn't be any problems.

We were guided to the bath to recover from travel fatigue as a gesture of her goodwill.

I took off my clothes in the dressing room and entered the bath.

"Oh~……"

A bath large enough that you'd be able to swim in it was filled with hot water.
Soap, a towel, and even a brand new pail was provided.

As expected of a well-known genius magic tool inventor of the Dragon Continent.
Money doesn't seem to be an issue.

I wash my body with soap, and clean off any filth.
For the first time since I was reincarnated in this world, I am able to soak in hot water up to my shoulders.

"Aa~ This is the life. As I thought, baths are really nice…"

I didn't swim, but I enjoyed stretching out my hands and feet as I soak in the spacious bath.

When I got out of the bath, a change of clothes had been prepared.
Neatly folded traditional clothes worn by men of the Dragon Race was there.

The design looks like certain kung fu attires from China in my

previous life.
It features short sleeves, and 7/8th length cropped trousers.

When I went out to the hallway, maid-san was waiting and she showed me to the dining room.

In front of the aforementioned dining room, I ran into ojou-sama who had just gotten out of the bath.
She was also wearing the dragon race's female traditional clothing; it was a dragon-dress look.

The women's dragon-dress had the exact same design as Chinese clothes.

My eyes gravitated towards the thin thigh peeking from the slit on the bright red dragon-dress.

"Oops! My feet slipped– (monotone)"

I trip unnaturally, looking at ojou-sama's figure in the dragon-dress up close.

Thin ankles, as well as thighs dyed slightly red from taking a bath.
Her smooth skin was still wet, and I understood that it would definitely be pleasant to touch.
And precisely because they were childlike, they exuded an immoral charm.

If I had encountered the current ojou-sama in my city from my previous life, I have confidence I would've stalked her.

Ojou-sama's post-bath skin became even redder and she quickly hid her mini blackboard behind her legs.
That gesture is also cute.

I awkwardly cleared my throat, and stood up while moving as if brushing the dust off my clothes.

A close call. Just a bit more, and my fascination with ojou-sama would've been exposed.
Then maid-san opened the door for us, and we entered the dining room.

“I’ve been waiting for you, Lute-kamisama, Chrisse-san.”

The head of the mansion, Meiya Dragoon, greeted us with a beaming smile.

She is 18 years old.
She wore the same red dragon-dress as ojou-sama.
Big breasts, shapely waist, and a slender legs that are long like a model.
She’s also a beauty to the extent that 100 out of 100 men all would have praised her face.

Apart from the two dragon horns on her head, her appearance was almost invariably similar to the human race.
She kindly offered us some dinner.

“Although we have some things to talk about, why don’t we first enjoy a meal? Our chef, for you both, spared no expense in preparing it.”

At Meiya’s signal, it was brought in.
The dishes were cramped on to a round two tiered table.

It was a Chinese-styled table .

Steamed meat buns .
Pale brown tea similar to oolong tea.
And others such as small dragon buns, spring rolls, shumai, gyoza, sui gyoza , etc… — A world of traditional Chinese *yum cha* snacks extended before us.

We had to ration our meals in order to travel to the Dragon Continent from the Demon Continent; we who were trying to be economical with our money… our stomachs rumbled.

“Come now, both of you, no need to be reserved.”

Urged by Meiya, ojou-sama and I expressed our gratitude and started eating.

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The three of us finished up the dishes that filled the Chinese-styled table.
While we were drinking the oolong-like pale brown tea, apparently called “chacha”, I once again informed Meiya if our circumstances.

In order to start my own Legion, I left the orphanage and became an adventurer.
Then I was deceived by rookie-hunters, stripped of all my possessions, and sold as a slave.
Fortunately, I was bought by Chrisse-ojousama’s father, Count Dan Gate Vlad, and narrowly escaped a cruel fate.
Those benefactors, her parents, are currently being held captive.
He frankly told Meiya everything; that they came to meet her in order to seek her aid with regard to obtaining necessary resources and intel to free Chrisse’s parents and retake her house.

Supposing Meiya lent her strength, then after the recovery of the Vlad house and Chrisse’s parents, the Vlad house promises to cover any expenses and provide a suitable reward on top of that.
Ojou-sama also nodded in agreement to this arrangement.

But Meiya simply shook her head at that proposal.

“I’m not interested in monetary rewards. Instead, I would like to make a request to Lute-kamisama.”
“A request?”

Meiya rose from her chair, and proceeded to kneel on the floor with her hands held together in front of her chest. Then she, very deeply, bowed her head.

The gasps of the maids who were waiting on us sent shivers down my skin.

“This posture is, to the Dragon race, an act which shows utmost respect.”

Meiya explained so.
Is this the so-called *dogeza* of my previous life’s Japan?

“Please, please… take this Meiya Dragoon as Lute-kamisama’s disciple!”

“Dis… disciple!? To take the genius magic tool inventor, Meiya Dragoon-sama, as such a thing like a disciple would be outrageous!”
“Far from it! Lute-kamisama is the true genius! The owner of talent that far surpasses the level of a mere genius!”

“By the way, I’ve been wondering since some time ago, but why are you addressing me with -kamisama? ”
“How else could I address the divine being who could create such a magnificent magic tool!? I could not even hazard a guess!”
“I, I appreciate the sentiment, but still… -kamisama is a bit…”

“If so, then how about ‘Lute-sama’?”
“Please simply address me as Lute; no need for honorifics.”
“What about ‘Lute-kyun sama’?”
“Seriously! No honorifics is fine! Rather, what’s with the “Lute-kyunsama” nonsense!?
“Impossible! To address Lute-kyunsama without honorifics! I would not do it even if you rip up my lips .”
“… … if so, then “-sama” is fine. Please never use “kyun” or the like ever again.”

I sighed in resignation.
Meiya once again pressed me.

“In that case, I accept and shall address you as Lute-sama. I, until Lute-sama takes me in as a disciple, will not for even a moment move from this spot.”

Meiya continued to exclaim.

“If it is Lute-sama’s desire, I would offer my everything! Status, fortune, and even my body and soul! All of it! So please make me your disciple, Lute-sama!”

Cut it out; ojou-sama’s sorrowful gaze is painful.

“I understand. I’ll make you my disciple. You don’t have to offer me things like your body or your soul; so instead, please lend us your strength to rescue master and the rest.”
“My utmost gratitude for this blessing .”

Meiya had on a smile that could outshine even the sun.
After a long journey, having eaten my fill and securing aid, the feeling of tension was gone and it made me sleepy.

Ojou-sama seems to also have reached her limit.

I proposed that we get a good rest for now and leave discussing the details for tomorrow.
Ojou-sama and Meiya were also of the same mind, and so we were dismissed for the day.

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The next morning…
Ojou-sama, Meiya and I were gathered in an open space beside an atelier within the Meiya estate’s grounds.

I requested Meiya to create mud walls and foundations with magic.
Atop the foundations, bricks were arranged in a typical fashion.

While waiting, I checked the guns’ conditions.

The S&W and AK47 I made, swindled away from me a bit more than 2 years ago by some fake adventurers, are back in my hands.

As for the revolver, its firing pin and hammer’s mainspring are worn out. If they’re this worn out, then even if the primer is struck, it probably can’t cause an ignition.
It seems the cylinder’s insides hasn’t been properly cleaned, either. Like this, when the ejector rod pushes out shell casings, it wouldn’t be smooth.

To put it bluntly, after firing, it may longer be possible to eject shell casings without hitting the ejector rod with a hammer or something.

Only for the characteristically tough AK47 does there seem to be no

problems. It may also be because I made it I made it after I was already experienced with handling Magic Liquid Metal.
Banana magazine loaded; safety catch toggled.
Set to semi-automatic.
I pulled the cocking handle, and the first bullet moved to the chamber.

Taking a shooting stance, I shot the brick blocks one by one, smashing them.

It worked perfectly, without flaw.
As expected of the AK; truly an assault rifle that can be fired without a hitch even if it were to be buried in a wet rice field for 6 months covered in rust and dirt .
Though I intend to disassemble it later, just to be safe.

"How is it, Lute-sama? Are there any problems?"
"The revolver still needs a little bit of tuning, but it seems that there are no major faults on either one."

Surprisingly, ojou-sama was not afraid and showed interest in the handgun.
On the contrary….

[Lute-oniichan, could you also teach me how to use that magic tool?]

She is proactively trying to learn.

[Using that magic tool; father, mother, everyone… I want the strength that can help them.]

Ojou-sama snorted roughly, demonstrating her will to fight.
The image of the girl who was afraid to simply go out of her own room until not too long ago was completely gone.

"Of course. I had fully intended for ojou-sama to join the battle. In fact, I believe that ojou-sama is our greatest war potential, our trump card."
[Someone like me is?]

Ojou-sama was perplexed by my unexpected response.
I answered with an earnest smile that I was not lying.

“For ojou-sama, the S&W M10 revolver and AK-47 are no good. I will prepare something more appropriate.”

Something that would suit ojou-sama–

“A gun that properly utilizes ojou-sama’s unique traits; that would be — the sniper rifle.”

[The sniper rifle?]
“Yes. … … The hour of our, the Vlad House’s, counterattack approaches.”

This moment marked the birth of the vampire who would one day be feared as “Magician Slayer”, “Princess of the Night”, and “Nightmare”.

Chapter 041 – Sniper Rifle

Lute, age 13

I had been under the care of the household of the Dragon Continent's magic device developer, Meiya Dragoon, for several months.

In return for the food and lodging—I had taken her as my disciple as she requested.
As my disciple, I had been teaching her about the process of making guns; but, of course, there were conditions.

The three conditions are thus—Not to spread the techniques as she pleases, not to misuse it, and to follow my instructions if any problem occurs.

To my conditions, Meiya exclaimed with an honest look in her eyes: [If I were to somehow break these conditions, I will bite my tongue in front of Lute-sama and die].

This girl's no good, she's scary
I didn't think she would seriously, honestly swear an oath of suicide.

But on the other hand, this means that Meiya would not betray me.

However, no matter how she's praised as a genius magic device developer, the work seems to be hard for her.

First, she couldn't make the small parts out of magic liquid metal.
If she poured magic into it it should have become hard, but the metal sheets she took out was hard on the right side and brittle on the left—she could only make out-of-balance things like that.
The forms were uneven, and the thickness and strength were also defective.

Maybe she lacked the power of imagination, or maybe some other reason….

I tried having her make cartridges, but it seems that she could not

imagine smokeless gunpowder to begin with.

It's not like I told her to simply make cartridges just by stuffing it with explosion magic.

But to tell Meiya, who hadn't seen nor heard of smokeless gunpowder, to imagine it, transform magic power, and put it into the cartridge, is a mistake from the start.

For now I would start by having her do some classroom learning about the basic knowledge regarding guns—the difference between the ammo for the revolver and the assault rifle, the purpose of rifling, the strength of metal required for use in handguns, etc.

At the same time as Meiya's classes, I was also coaching Chrisse-ojousama on how to control her magic power.

Ojousama's magic power is about the same as mine
So if she could remember how to control her magic power she can do what I could.

Excepting the time used for research, it took me about 30 days until I could remember the technique to control my magic power.
It should take about the same amount of time to drill this technique into ojousama.

At midday
The Dragon race has their meals in the mornings, noons, and evenings.
When in Rome, do as the Romans do—ojousama and I properly had three meals a day.

In the afternoons we would do practice battles to build up ojousama's strength.

Ojousama would get changed into rough clothes, tie up her long hair, and do warm-up exercises.
Firstly, she would make a run around the outer bounds of the Meiya estate.
Running to build up her body strength.

Ojousama had no body strength owing to being a shut-in.

Which is why she was doing practice to increase her base strength.

After she's done running, there would be unarmed combat and sword practice.
For unarmed combat she would do some serious sparring with me.
For swordplay, I had her practice swings with a wooden sword and exchange blows with me.

This training regiment is the same as the one Gigi-san taught me.

(I wonder why Gigi-san betrayed the Vlad house he loved so much…)

No matter how much I think about it I won't get an answer unless it's from the person himself.
That was another reason why we need to gain strength and return to the Demon Continent.
At night, once ojousama's fatigue is at its peak, she had dinner, a bath, and went straight to sleep.
Meiya and I holed up inside the workshop and worked on making the sniper rifle.

The rifle we were making—was a Remington M700P.
To be precise, we intended to make something with the M700P as a base.

Firstly, what is a "sniper rifle"?

Until the First World War, infantry troops would stand in ranks separated by a distance of several hundred meters to 1000 meters and attack using bolt-action rifles (bolt action is a method of firing guns by shooting one bullet at a time and reloading by manually operating the bolt (cylindrical part situated behind the chamber) using its handle). However with the appearance of machine guns, these ranks of troops were easily mowed down.

If an infantry troop were to attack a machine gun emplacement the way they have always done they would inevitably turn into a mountain of corpses. So things like attacking at night or digging trenches to allow close-quarters combat became commonplace. However, with the bolt action rifle, during the time taken to reload the bolt after shooting they would be vulnerable to attack from enemies.

So rather than guns that need to be carefully aimed from a distance, infantry would seek guns that could fire rapidly from a short range.

Then submachine guns (small machine guns that could be used like a pistol) and assault rifles were developed, and the tactic of barraging the enemy with bullets became mainstream.

However, weapons that could be precisely aimed and fired from a long distance was indispensable for eliminating enemy commanders, radio operators, and machine gunners situated a long distance away. So the simple and high accuracy bolt action rifle received attention once again.

The bolt action rifle that was sought for a new role received various improvements and strengthening necessary for sniping.
Thus, the [sniper rifle] was born.
But although they're all called [sniper rifles], there are various kinds according to target and usage like ones for military use, hunting, and for shooting games.
For example, for hunting use—the bolt action rifle is lightened and called a [mountain rifle].

The [mountain rifle] is a [relatively lightweight guns having a long range capable of taking down big game].
For a lightweight gun to fire a heavy bullet, the recoil is severe.
But rather than the recoil, the fact of having to lug a heavy gun while trekking on a mountain is considered, so the gun was made lighter.

As for the case of shooting games—game rifles do not come with a magazine, and it had a unique shape because it was specialized for use in games, no consideration was put into making it easy to carry.
Which is why although the game rifle can shoot with accuracy, it does not have any practical use.
There is no instance in which a game rifle is used for sniping as-is.

Then, for military use—military and police [sniper rifles] were designed with a shape that was easy to be carried, and had a reasonable weight though not as light as mountain rifles, it is a gun with good balance.
Normally, when you say [sniper rifle] you would mean the military/police use ones.
The gun I was making this time was also a military/police use sniper rifle.

Anyway, there were also cases where an automatic rifle, that had a lower accuracy than a bolt-action rifle, were chosen for a military troop.
The reason is that while a bolt-action rifle can only shoot single rounds at a time, an automatic rifle can fire 2, 3 shots between reloads, giving it a higher adaptability (for example when having to deal with several terrorists simultaneously).
However, the automatic rifle reloads automatically after firing. At that moment, the vibration from the parts moving inside interferes with the firing and this makes its accuracy lower than that of the bolt-action rifle.

Because I made the AK-47, I had the option of making the semi-automatic sniper rifle SVD Dragunov that was officially adopted in the former Soviet Union.
The Dragunov's internals were made based on the AK-47. With the scope included, it weighs 4.3 kilograms, which is light for an automatic.
There was an automatic rifle called H&K PSG-1 that weighed 8.1 kilograms.

But this time, since we aim to rescue master and madam, there was a possibility that either one or both of them would be used as hostages.
In that situation, if we could save just madam, master could be free to act to free himself.
So I needed a high accuracy sniper rifle that had an allowable error of less than 2 cm in 100 m and 6 cm in 300 m, and so I used the M700P as a base.

The M700P is a high performance sniper rifle intended for use by police and army special forces made based on the hunting rifle M700 by the American small arms maker Remington LLC. The M700P had a long barrel and high accuracy. It was a bolt-action rifle for use by police special forces and in hostage rescue scenarios requiring certainty within the first shot.

Its specs were as follows.

Caliber: 7.62 mm x 51 NATO rounds
Overall Length: 1662 mm
Barrel Length: 660 mm
Rounds per Load: 5 rounds [Inner box Magazine]

It's a sniper rifle well suited for our purpose.
Firstly I started making the core with the rifling carved onto it.

The sniper rifle requires a higher accuracy than the AK-47.
I had to do all the production work carefully.
Concentration is important.

"…. I feel a bit tired. I think we should stop here for now."

Then after a few hours of work, I ended at a suitable point, and went to the room given to me for a late night sleep.
I laid down on the bed, and as I closed my eyes I quickly fell asleep.

This is how I spent my day nowadays.
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In the afternoon, time for the unarmed combat practice.
At the courtyard, ojousama and I were having a mock battle.

Ojousama, in rough garb with her hair tied, was lunging at me with all her strength.
She was of course using body strengthening to support her body.

I easily avoided her right straight by circling around sideways.
I stopped her with a left jab, and kicked her with a right side kick.

[tsu!?]

Ojousama guarded for the kick at a dangerous moment.
But she lost to the force and rolled down onto the ground.

"Ojousama, your attacks are too sloppy. You should've moved to anticipate the opponent's next move. If it's just hitting each other even a child could do it. Hurry up and stand."

Ojousama supported herself with her hands on the ground, breathing roughly, and made no sign of moving.
Not minding that, I started to hurl insults at her.

"Seriously HOW long are you FUCKING going to lay down there? Get a hold of yourself MAGGOT!"

Ojousama, still breathing roughly, raised her face with a difficult expression.

“You are this world’s lowest lifeform. You’re not a demon race. You’re not even worth trash scrounged from amphibians! What is it? If you don’t like it then show me your guts!”

Ojousama picked herself up while gritting her teeth and braced herself.

“So you can stand! You’ve got guts. I’ll work you to the bone as your reward. I’ll work you till you drop dead! I’ll work you till you have to drink milk from your ass!”
“Hey——!”

I turned my head toward the angry voice, and there was one of ojousama’s childhood friend, the Demon race, Centaur clan Karen Bishop there.
Standing behind her is a maid carrying a large travelling bag that looks to be hers.

Karen squared up her shoulders and stepped up to me, her ponytail swinging.

“Lute! You’re a servant! What the hell are you saying to Chrisse! I don’t really get what it means but I know it’s something bad!”
“!? Welcome, Karen-sama! It looks like the letter safely—”

As I was about to give Karen a warm welcome, the owner of the place Meiya popped a vein and angrily interrupted me.

“How rude! A demon race saying something like that to the genius of all geniuses Lute-sama! Guards! What are you doing! Hurry up and kick this insolent one out! How did someone like this get inside my estate!”
“Calm down Meiya. She’s ojousama’s friend, the Centaur Karen Bishop-sama. I already told you that I sent a letter to explain our current situation and asked her to come, right?”

“…. She’s Chrisse-san’s friend, huh. Truthfully, I think she’s a lovely

person. How do you do Karen-san. My name is Meiya Dragoon, Lute-sama's number one disciple. Feel free to relax and think of this place like your own home."
「こ、こちらこそよろしく」
"M, me too."

Once I scolded Meiya, she became friendly as if she was a different person.
Karen was also surprised at her change in attitude and became nervous.

Karen cleared her throat and turned to me once again.

"Anyway, While you are fugitives, but what the hell are you saying to your master Chrisse."
"Well, that was just part of training."
"Training?"
"I already have ojousama's consent. It's a spartan military training. I would never say something like that to her otherwise, right, ojousama?"
[Yeah, it's just as Lute-oniichan said.]

Ojousama wrote on the mini blackboard and showed it to Karen.

[Karen-chan, thanks for specifically coming for me. I'm very happy to see you again after so long.]
"You're taking the words out of my mouth. I was surprised when a letter arrived at my home after I heard you went missing. It had a name I don't recognize, but it was written in Chrisse-chan's handwriting that I know very well."

Karen stepped up to Ojousama and hugged her.

"Really, I'm glad you're alright…. Not only me, but Barnie and Muir were also worried when we heard Chrisse went missing."

The two were hugging each other, being glad for each other's safety, almost like sisters.

Some time ago I asked for Meiya's help to write a letter addressed to Karen.
I had actually wanted to send letters to the other two, but for all three of

ojousama's friends to receive a letter and have them move at the same time would stand out too much, so it can't be helped.

After discussing it, I decided to send a letter to Karen, who was most acquainted with military matters.
Her family runs a large weapons and armor business.
Not just selling them, they practically do all kinds of work on them.

Karen's family has their own mercenary army, and they are dispatched to various places with weapons and armors. It seems that they using their products on the battlefield to spread word of their brand, which promotes business. Furthermore after the battles, they would be able to make improvements from feedback on suggestions and ease of use regarding the weapons etc.

Having that kind of family situation, and consequently receiving strict military training, I decided to entrust her with calming the others down.
The fact that I called her to the Meiya estate in the Dragon Continent is also for no other reason.
It is to let her know about our situation, for new intelligence, and to inform her of our safety.

I asked ojousama, [wasn't it forbidden to ask the help of another family in a family dispute?], but she said that it was okay, because it's not like we were asking her for direct help. Therefore I was able to send the letter to Karen without hesitation.

Karen tore herself off of ojousama, and rubbed the tears in her eyes.

"It's also good that Lute is safe. Really, thanks for protecting Chrisse."
"Not at all, it's the obvious thing to do as a butler of the Vlad house. Then, I'm sorry to ask this immediately after you just got here, but can you tell us about the current situation?"
"Well, since the weather is nice and all, why don't we have some tea at the courtyard."

As Meiya raised her hand, the maids have already arranged a table, chairs, a parasol, tea, and tea cakes at the courtyard, as if they had been prepared beforehand.

In under three minutes, a small but fashionable spot had been erected at the courtyard.

Temporarily stopping the unarmed combat practice, we listened to Karen's story while sipping on the tea.

According to the news Karen brought us—
It seems that after master was captured, they put on a magic prevention collar to seal his magic and sold him as a slave.
She knew that he was sold not to the Demon Continent, but some other continent, though she didn't know where.

Madam was locked up at the top of a tower in the Vlad castle.
She also had a magic prevention collar put on her, and was not able to escape on her own.

The castle seems to be occupied by the Vampire house's head, the eldest son Pylkkänen Vlad and the second son Ravio Vlad.

They were being loud about plundering master's business and even unreasonably resorting to violence to unfairly lower wages, so they faced considerable resistance from the workers. Thanks to that, the business seem to have become stagnated.

Merry-san and the other surviving servants escaped and hid in several places, but since they had little fighting power they were unable to do anything.
Now that they don't have master, the difference in power was overwhelmingly against them.
Moreover, there were several of the Vampire house's magicians besides Pylkkänen and Ravio standing watch at the castle. Because of that, they couldn't do a thing.

The only blessing within the misfortune is that they guaranteed madam's safety
As she was their only prisoner, if they somehow got her wounded or killed, Merry-san and the other houses with relations to the Vlad house won't stay silent. They couldn't protest about matter of master and his brothers, but madam is another matter entirely. If something happens to her her relatives won't stay still.

If madam died it certainly would go beyond the limits of what can be settled as being a family dispute.
It will be a war to pay back blood with blood.

Of course, it was something they did not want. Therefore they guaranteed madam's safety.

Furthermore, it was also the same reason why they searched every nook and cranny for ojousama.

If they had ojousama, were madam to pass away for some reason they could use ojousama as a new hostage to protect against Merry-san's attacks.

Karen grit her teeth sorrowfully.

"I want to do something to help if I could, but another family can't interfere in a family dispute. I'm sorry I can't do anything besides providing information."
"Not at all, this is helpful enough. But is it really alright? If it's forbidden to interfere in a family dispute, doing all this, though it's only providing information, would also count."

Ojousama had already said [it's okay], but just in case, I tried asking Karen.
In response, she put on a wicked smile.

"I'm only making sure that my dear friend is safe and have a chat with her. If she somehow got intelligence from that, that's not my problem, right?"

In other words, it seems like this doesn't count as [lending a hand].
I don't know what standards they were using, but if it's no problem then so be it.

"Karen-sama, thank you very much. Thanks to you I was able to get accurate information on the situation. This way, one of the strategies I thought up seems to be usable."
"Hoo, what kind of strategy is that?"

I had the daughter of a military family who had mercenaries in their employ, Karen, listen to my plan, and asked for her opinion.

The contents of the plan is simple.
Get inside the castle with a small number of people using the escape route we used when we fled the castle.
Meet up with madam, and then leave the castle.

Meanwhile, in order to draw the eyes of the castle guards, I want to have Merry-san and the other servants do something flashy as a diversion. Though they have little fighting power, they should be able to do something once.
If they did that the Vampire house head would be on the lookout and dispatch the magicians after them. As a result, the castle's defenders would be shorthanded.

Karen folded her arms and considered the strategy.

"….. I see. It's a simple plan, but it's more realistic than gathering a force and assault the castle, but isn't it hard to rescue Seras-san just with Chrisse and Lute?"

Having her point that out, I frowned.
Certainly, our fighting power is not enough to infiltrate the castle.

"I wasn't intending to include ojousama in the infiltration team. I was going to have her assist during our escape."
"Then can you do it alone, Lute? Not being a magician and all."
"U, ummm…"

Meiya, who had been silent, raised her hand.
With a red face and bleary eyes, she announced.

"Then I, Lute-sama's number one student, shall serve as your partner! I'm confident that I can attentively help you out like a lover, like a wife, like a faithful servant—nay! Even more than that!"
"No, Meiya is no good. Even though you're a B-minus ranked mage, you don't have good reflexes, do you? I certainly can't take you along."
"Uguu!?"

She collapsed as if she had taken an arrow right to the heart.
However she is totally non-athletic, I tried having her practice with ojousama once, but she became nothing but a burden.
At that time I cut her off from practice since we had no time and she was being a hindrance.

[So how about we hire some adventurers from the Guild?]
“That is absolutely a no.”

I swiftly rejected ojousama’s proposal.
There’s no way I could include some adventurer… some untrustworthy person in this important plan. In the end, they were no more than outsiders employed using money. If any problem happens…

The bitter trauma from when I was tricked by fake adventurers went through my mind.

As I wanted Merry-san and the others to act as diversion, I can’t include them.
In the first place, they had already been seen by the Vampire house, and were under observation.
I can’t have them help with an undercover surprise operation.

I at least wanted one other capable person for the castle infiltration.
At least a B-minus ranked magician, and someone I know that I can trust. If possible, someone who had learned magic, and was good at handling a handgun, that much goes without saying.
No way someone like that exi—no, there is one person like that.

My fiancée who grew up together with me at Elle-sensei’s orphanage, Snow!

“If my fiancée Snow, who’s studying at a magic school were here, this discussion would be over sooner. If I were to go meet her right now it would take over a year to go there and back…. I guess it’s impossible after all. Hm? what’s wrong Meiya? You look pale.”

Meiya started to sweat like waterfall with a pale face.

“No, actually… how should I put it, well…”

Meiya mumbled, stumbling on her words.
Rather than Meiya's response, Karen reacted to my remark.

"Lute has a fiancée? I didn't know that."
"My childhood friend who grew up in the same orphanage with me. I never had the chance to talk about her, sorry. But I wonder if she could conveniently appear. Please reach her, o my voice! Somehow—"

"LUTE-KUN!!"

The moment I raised my hands and jokingly offered a prayer to the heavens.

Seemingly having waited for the moment, a young girl appeared from behind a tree planted in the courtyard.
Her silver hair tied in a ponytail. A bishoujo with dog ears, a tail, skin white as a field of snow, and breasts that you could tell was big even from under her clothes, approached with tears in her eyes.

"I miss you…. I miss you, Lute-kun!"
My fiancée Snow who should have been studying magic at a school in the Fairy Human Continent was for some reason standing before my eyes.

Chapter 042 – Participation

Snow who is supposed to be studying at the magic school on the Fairy Human Continent, appeared in Meiya's residence!
The chair flew from the momentum of me standing up.

"S-Snow!? Why are you here! You aren't a fake, are you!"
[[Lute-kun! Lute-kun! Lute-kun!]]

Snow came running while calling my name in Fairy Human Continent's language.

She jumped and wrapped her arms around my neck.
Her face buried was making "fuga fuga" sounds as she sniffed my smell.
The long-missed action caused a feeling of nostalgia to gush out within my chest, so much that I unintentionally hugged her until it hurts.

[[Lute-kun, you're suffocating me.]]
[[So, sorry. I was so happy I hugged you too hard.]]

It took me awhile to be able to speak out in the Fairy Human language initially, as I haven't used it in a while.
It's the adverse effect for not using it in such a long time.

"Lute, what is she saying? And who the hell is she? She couldn't be someone from the main family right……"

Karen moves in front of ojou-sama to cover for her.
I panicked and attempted to prove Snow's innocence.

"You are mistaken! She is Snow, my childhood friend and fiancée, that was mentioned earlier!"

I switched language and asked.

[[Does Snow understand Demon Continent language?]]
[[Not a problem, as it is a mandatory class during the magic school freshman year.]]

Come to think of it, even though Snow is very weak in math from small, she is quite good in literacy.
I'm getting nostalgic of El-sensei's lecture.

Snow parted her hands from me and gave a courteous greeting in Demon Continent Language.

"Pleased to meet you, I am Snow, Lute's fiancée."

Though the intonation was strange here and there, there mostly were no problems.
She continued her introduction.

"I attend at the Fairy Human Continents magic school. I am a A-minus Rank magician."
"Whaaaa-!?"

I involuntarily let out my voice as I was startled.
Surely I must have misheard it, is what I thought.

"S-Snow! Surely you're joking, that you're a A-minus rank magician."
"It's the truth. I wanted to graduate as soon as possible to meet Lute and endured it. And so I became a A-minus rank magician. Of course it wasn't by my strength alone, I was heavily taught by Shishou."
"Shishou?"
"Un! Um, Shishou is a magician called [Freezing Witch]. I got along well with her and was taught many things."
"F-freezing witch!?"

This time it was Karen who raised her voice in surprise

"Being a High-elf and called the [Freezing Witch], even among the High-elves there is only the one famous, having lived 1000 years and reached S-Rank magician!?"

A-rank is a position that only a few of the so-called [geniuses] reach.
S-rank is for those entities called [supermen], [freaks], and [monsters].

“Un, that person is my Shishou. She told me she was naming me the [Witch of Ice and Snow], but it’s kind of embarrassing so it’s hard to say.”
“No, you say embarrassing, that’s not the thing one focuses on……”

I reflexively let out a tsukkomi.
Snow tilted her head, it is not known if she understood it.

Idiots and geniuses are only separated by a fine line —— I wonder what sort of campus life did Snow have at the magic school after she was sent there?

“……so why is Snow here? What about school?”
“That’s because obtaining A-minus rank at the magic school will garner enough credits to graduate without having to attend. Just as I was considering on going to meet up with Lute, that person said something terrible!”
“Hiee~!”

Snow pointed to Meiya who was crouching within the table’s shadow in an attempt to hide herself.
Meiya was frightened in the face of Snow as if she was a small animal in front of its predator.
I never would have thought that the 2 of them were acquainted.
Just what happened between the 2?

“Calm down Snow. For the time being, explain to me from the start.”
“Un, understood. About that……”

Snow explained in sequence the reason for her being here.

Her first time meeting Meiya at the Fairy Human Continent magic school parlor.
She approached Snow with the desire to negotiate a price for the [S&W M10 2-inch] revolver that is in Snow’s possession.

Her friendly attitude suddenly changed as she raise her voice crying out, after Snow rejected her offer.

“Lute-sama was already killed by a monster! That is why, that Magic Tool should not be in the possession of someone like you who does not

know its worth. In order to leave his achievement to/for future generations, someone such as myself should be the one to have it!”

Meiya, other than being a genius Magic Tool inventor, she could also speak in Fairy Human Continentlanguage.

But that brought forth disaster, having said what was on her mind.
As a result, Snow having been infuriated by the utterance, pointed the muzzle at the blasphemous Meiya.

After leaving the parlor, Snow once again made arrangements to go on a journey.
She believed that Meiya’s utterance was surely a lie, however anxiety was tightening her chest so she decided to first to head to El-sensei.
Because she believed that El-sensei surely knew where I currently was.

During Snow’s journey from the orphanage in Aljio territory to the magic school, it took around 3 months for a one-way trip on a carriage.
This time, her journey from the magic school to the orphanage was travelled in a straight line without dropping by any towns nor regard to dangerous roads where monsters and bandits appear, she reached her destination in about 1 month.

Again with your reckless actions……

Upon returning to the orphanage, El-sensei was surprised.

For the sake of inquiring my location from sensei, and she reluctantly held out a letter.
It was the letter that I wrote to El-sensei.

Fumbling at starting my adventurer life, being sold as a slave by a slave merchant and currently there is no problem as I am under the protection of the Vlad’s house as ojou-sama’s butler. Please do not worry, but as I do not wish to distract Snow from her studies do not tell her, so it was written.

As soon as she received the letter, Snow, without wasting a moment, headed for the Vlad House in the Demon Continent. And as she was going past a checkpoint in the Dragon Continent, it seems shesmelled a

nostalgic scent .

Following that scent, she arrived at the Meiya residence and thoughtlessly jumped over the walls surrounding it, and when she entered the courtyard where I was at, she spontaneously cheerfully ran over …… or so it would seem.
Oy, isn't this timing is way too good no matter how you look at it.

After sniffing my personal odor Snow said "It's the best" while swaying happily.
No, nobody said to explain that much.

After separating when we were 10, I haven't met with Snow for over 3 years.
Her body seems to have grown but… the more I get involved the "ahonoko"-ification seems to be progressing.

Having finished listening to Snow's story, Meiya, with face paler than a ghost, came to us with the traditional Dragon Race dogeza.

"M-m-m-my apologies! Snow-sama! I was not aware that milady was Lute-kuns fiance and let such rude things come from my mouth!"

To such a sudden development Lute stiffened.
Meiya continued on.

"At that time, I have truly underestimated Lute-sama. However! That was when I was still ignorant of the untouchable majesticity of Lute-sama. Now, I am able to believe that Lute-sama cannot be killed by lowly monsters. So please somehow, do not throw away this number one disciple! If I were to be thrown away by Lute-sama, I would lose the reason to stay in this world! If such a time were to come, please ask me to kill myself."

We-ell in truth I wasn't killed by monsters, but was tricked by fake adventurers.

Also, Meiya keeps claiming that she is my number one disciple……

"…..Using ones life as a shield like that, and expecting forgiveness from the other is a bit different I think"

“Nn!?”

To Meiyas desperate apology, Snow takes a tough attitude.
I pat Snow’s head in order to calm her down.

“I did not know that you two had such a past, however it is not as though damage was caused? Plus now I am currently indebted in many ways to Meiya. So do not treat each other cruely. Meiya, I would not dismiss you as disciple. So please stop talking about such dangerous things as suicide.”

“Muu, if Lute-kun says so….”
“Th-thank you very much! Lute-sama! I am unworthy! This Meiya Dragoon will swear fealty to Lute-sama!”

Snow reluctantly does so, Meiya raised her face while shedding tears like a waterfall.
And as though doing a complete 180 unlike with Meiya, Snow turned to Ojou-sama, my current ?owner?, with a friendly attitude.

“Nice to meet you, I am Snow. Are you Chrisse-chan?”
[Y-Yes! That’s right!]

Ojou-sama hurriedly wrote the words in the Demon Continent’s Language.
Snow took Ojou-samas hand and said her thanks while tears formed on the edges of her eyes.

“Thank you! Thank you for saving Lute-kun. Truly thank you!”
[From my side as well, I keep being saved by Lute-oniichan in many ways.]
“Oniichan?”
[As I am a year younger and it feels as though he is my older brother, I asked to call him Oniichan… Is it no good?]
“Uun, not at all, if anything I could even be jealous. If Lute-kun is Oniichan, then I’m Chrisse’s Oneechan right. Please call me Oneechan.”
[Hai! Snow-oneechan]
“That I managed to get such a cute little sister! I’m so happy.”

Snow hugged Ojou-sama without holding back. Her tail was also

busily shaking back and forth with joy.
The shy Ojou-sama without being scared even though this was the first time meeting Snow, was smiling in her embrace.

As Snow lets go of Ojou-sama, she turns to Karen to introduce herself to her as well.
As they both wore ponytails, they seem to strangely get along.

And Snow utters a question.

"So, what are Lute-kun and the others talking about anyway?"
"If I were to talk about that it would be a really long story, though….."

As I was scratching my head on where to start talking about it, Meiya voiced a proposition.

"Snow-san and Karen-san, must be tired as you just arrived from your journeys, so how about you both take a bath first to relax from it? After you finish with the bathing, it would just about be time for dinner, so how would it be to listen to it all as we eat?"

It is true that both of them had just arrived and must be tired.
Having them listen to more than they already have here in the courtyard, makes me feel bad.

"That's right. Let's do as Meiya suggested."
"If Lute-kun says so, then we'll do so. Karen-san, let's go together to the bath"
"I-Is it alright? With my body being such…"
"It's alright so let's go together! Chrisse-chan too, since you're all covered in mud, I'll wash your back"
[Yes, Snow-oneechan!]

With this flow, Ojou-sama will also be going to take a bath it seems.
As Meiya will be giving orders to the maids, she will not be joining them to bathe.

And so it came that I will be telling the situation to Snow while we ate dinner.

▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼

After the bathing, Snow appeared in a Dragon dress.
As expected, there was no Dragon dress that could be used by Karen of the Centaur and so she came in the normal clothes she had prepared herself.

While eating dinner, we told Snow about the situation that is currently happened.
On top of that, I asked Snow for her cooperation
Of course even though it was asked of her by her childhood friend and fiance, it was not unconditional —- so it was told.

But, Snow without hesitating agreed to cooperate.
Ojou-sama while shedding tears very deeply said her gratitude.

Night, as I was about to sleep, a knock on the door.
As I open the door, on the other side—-

"I'm sorry I'm late."

There stood Snow in pajamas, holding a pillow.
Wearing the engagement bracelet on her left arm, which was given a long time ago.

"After the long wait, I thought that we would be together tonight…. Is it no good?"

There is no way that it would not be alright!

"This is between me and Snow, you don't have to reserve yourself go ahead and enter"
"…. If that's so, I'll be intruding."

As Snow enters, she arranges her pillow onto the bed.
Her pajamas were a shirt on top and some shorts like hotpants below.
Since of course there is no such thing as a bra, she walks and the splendidly grown Omune-sama greatly sways.
As she walks barefoot, the healthy and slender silvery tail rises and harmonizingly swings along.

She grew in height and also unimaginably so in the chest area.
Though my mental age is 40, my body is still that of a young 13 year old.
To my fiance in front of my eyes telling myself “don’t lust” is the impossible part.

(C-Calm down myself. Truly in the Meiya residence….in another persons home to receive for the first time even for me would be past unpleasant. There is also the problem of Ojou-sama and the master and everyone… I will restrain myself.)

As I count prime numbers, I slowly get into the same bed where Snow is.
Even though she prepared a pillow by herself, she places her head onto my arm.

The chest on my flank! Snow’s legs are coiling around! I feel as though the chains of reasons are slowly starting to scrape and fall apart.

However, even such desire is extinguished, as I noticed that Snow was crying.

“Snow, are you crying?”
“Being able to be like this with Lute-kun, I was just so happy…”
“….Forgive me Snow. Even the engagement bracelet got ruined.”
“Uun, to be able to be like this with Lute-kun is all I want. Truly it’s good that you were safe.”

Snow buries her tear filled face.
As though she was on the edge of delirium she continued to mumble “It’s good that Lute-kun was safe” while continuing to cry.

I continued to repeat apologies as many times as I could, for thewhole night — I gently pet Snow’s head until she finally cried herself to sleep.

Chapter 043 – Girls' Meeting at Night

The morning after I shared a bedroom with Snow.
The Centaur Karen Bishop left the Meiya Estate to go back to the Demon Continent.

We did recommend that she take it easy and stay for a little while, but she herself wanted to inform the other two friends of ojousama's about her safety and to Merry-san and the gang about the plan, so she flew off like an arrow.

That's a military girl for you.
Muscle for brains.

Snow stayed at the Meiya residence.
Moreover, she took over the responsibility of ojousama's martial arts and swords training from me.

Meiya and I was to concentrate on the work on the M700P sniper rifle (although Meiya only did so far as help out).

In return for food and lodging and the magic liquid metal, I was supposed to teach her about guns, but since there was no time I had her accept that I will be concentrating on the sniper rifle.
As thanks I promised that I would do so right after Master and Madam had been rescued.

Our daily schedule nowadays is as follows.
Morning—Meiya and I working on the sniper rifle. Ojousama practicing magic power control.
Evening—Meiya and I working on the sniper rifle. Ojousama trains in unarmed combat and swordplay with Snow. Also, recently revolver and assault rifle firing practice had been added to her practice subjects.

This is one of those recent days.

By keeping up with practice without complaints, ojousama's body had become stronger than average.

In unarmed and sword combat, she had reached a stage where she could defend herself.

On the other hand, her marksmanship was at a level where you can't say it's mere natural talent.
I can't wait to have her hold the sniper rifle.

Then, about the fabrication progress…. Once I could make the core for carving the riflings, making the gun body won't be that hard.

I dipped the core in the magic liquid metal and imagined the gun barrel around it, just like when using cold hammering.
To suppress jitter, I imagined a thick, heavy barrel.

The longer the barrel is, the front sight and rear sight became further apart, which makes it easier to sense [Aiming Errors], but long barrels make the muzzle end vibrate harder when the gun shakes. So I made the barrel thick.

For rifle barrels, a length of about 500 mm is enough, but for the M700 Police I'm making now the barrel was 660 mm long.
It is the barrel's length that gives it the precision for accurate firing.

The weight also had the advantage of making it more stable. However, if it was too heavy it becomes difficult to carry, so I needed to cut grooves on the thick barrel as a method to make it lighter

Then again, the Vampire clan had more physical strength than humans. Ojousama was no exception, by using body strengthening she defeated me in arm wrestling.

The other thing I need to pay attention to about the barrel was cutting an angle on the muzzle—the so called [Crown].

The end of the barrel, the muzzle, was a part that is easy to damage
If the muzzle is damaged, the moment a bullet is fired through it, gases would cause the bullet's trajectory to be offset, although only slightly

So the muzzle is not left just as a cross-section cut from the barrel, but instead an angle is cut into it. This way it becomes harder to damage. This

part is called the [crown].

There is also the [bedding] where the gun receiver (the part connected to the barrel and the bolt) is glued to the gunstock.
Unless the receiver is glued to the gunstock, the contact point becomes a [point] instead of a stable [surface] and the aiming precision becomes bad.

On the other hand, the barrel and the stock shouldn't be glued too strongly together.
When the gun is fired, the barrel would vibrate strongly, though not by far. If it were to hit the stock at that time, the vibration would only become stronger, and also the vibration would be different each time so aiming accuracy would decrease

For that reason the barrel and the stock are separated by over 1 mm. Separating the barrel and the stock like this is called floating (or floating barrel). This way, every time the gun is fired, the barrel would move the same way (given that the bullet and the powder are identical), and won't interfere much with the aiming accuracy.

Another point where the sniper rifle is different than other guns is the trigger.
In normal rifles, the trigger weight (the power needed to pull the trigger, trigger pull) is around 3 kg, but for the sniper rifle it is lowered to less than half of that. This kind of lightened trigger is called [Feather Touch] triggers.

Still, even though the trigger weight was so light, unless the trigger is pulled in the same direction as the bullet's flight, it would affect the direction of said flight and the bullet will stray even if just a little bit (forward-backward movement have almost no effect on the bullet's ballistic trajectory).
So to make sure that doesn't happen, snipers do things like think of themselves not as people pulling a trigger, but become like stone and become one with the gun. Also, it is said that the former Japanese Army was taught to be [like frost descending on a dark night] when pulling the trigger.

For as long as they live, human bodies breathe and their hearts beat. It is impossible to be perfectly still.

Which is why various tricks become necessary.

There are still a lot of things that one needs to be careful of when making the sniper rifle body, but so long as care is taken during the manufacture, there will be no problems for the most part. The one that will be problematic is the bullet cartridge.

Even when making the revolver and the AK-47, the bullet cartridge had caused more problems than the gun body itself.

The cartridges we were making were 7.62 mm × 51.
The size is about 1.5 times a AAA battery.
This ammunition cartridge is to be used when aiming at targets 300 meters away.

I wonder how much time it'll take to make this….
▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼
At night, there was a knock on my bedroom door.
It was of course, my childhood friend and fiancée, Snow.

Every night since our reunion she would come sleep on the same bed with me.
Thanks to that I was finding it hard to keep my self-control….

Somehow, though, she's being a bit strange tonight.
As she opened the door, the first thing out of Snow's mouth is an apology.

"I'm sorry, Lute-kun, I'm not going to be sleeping with you tonight."
"I don't actually mind, but is something wrong?"
"Today Chrisse-chan invited me to a tea party tonight, and I promised to have a chat about lots of things."

I see, so it was a pajama-party-like event.

"She said she'll tell me all about Lute-kun as a butler, I'm looking forward to it. ….Also, there were some things on my mind so I thought I'd like to talk with her about it."
"All right. It can't be helped then. Don't sleep so late, though. Tell that to ojousama, too."
"Fufufufu, Lute-kun, you sound like Chrisse-chan's mother"

“I’m not her mom, I’m her butler.”

“Ah that’s right isn’t it. Well, see you tomorrow then. Good night Lute-kun.”
“Yeah, ‘night.”

After exchanging pleasantries with Snow, I tucked in to bed early
Right this time, Snow is probably having a fun fun pajama party with ojousama.

For the first time since I reunited with Snow, I was sleeping alone.
Feels a bit lonely.
▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼
The next morning, I met up with Snow and ojousama in front of the dining room.
Of course, both of them looked a little sleepy.

They were both wearing dragon dresses.
They suited each of them all too well.

“Morning Snow, good morning ojousama.”
“Morning, Lute-kun.”
“*gasp*”

Snow greeted me as usual, but ojousama’s face turned red and she hid behind Snow’s back.
That reaction came as a shock to me.

Ojousama and I had known each other for over 2 years.
I didn’t think we were still so distant.

(Eh? Did I do something?)

Snow laughed in amusement. Seems like me making a confused face in the morning was funny.

“Lute-kun, you’re overreacting. She’s just embarrassed because we talked about lots of things about you last night.”
“Hold on there Snow. Just what about me were you talking about?”
[Y, you can’t, Snow-oneechan! That thing was a secret just between us!]

“It’s all right, I wasn’t going to tell Lute-kun.”

They ignored me and left for their room amicably, like a pair of sisters.
I was left behind all alone.

(What about me was it? Snow said [all sorts] of things, right… M, maybe she told her about how I shit my pants back at the orphanage!? Then it’s no wonder ojousama turned red in the face! Uooooo! Seriously!? Did my gentlemanly image suddenly crash and burn!?)

“Is anything the matter, Lute-sama?”

Meiya came and talked to me, who was writhing in agony alone in front of the room.
I ignored her call and continued writhing in agony.

Like this, several months passed since we arrived here.
—The time for the rescue is steadily approaching.

Chapter 044 – Breaking In

—Third person POV—

The Vlad Castle in the Demon Continent
Up until a few months back it was the home of the whole family of Dan Gate Vlad and their servants.
However, they fell into the patriarch of the Vampire house's trap, and the family scattered. The servants were also forced out of the castle.

Now the patriarch of the Vampire clan Pylkkänen Vlad and his younger brother Ravino live there.

Their wives, daughters, sons, and family stayed at their own house.
Pylkkänen and Ravino settled down in the Vlad castle while they were in the middle of checking through its assets. They investigated business capital, bonds, household goods, and other things that could turn into money.
Living in the Vlad castle was convenient for that purpose.

Count Dan's wife, Lady Seras Gate Vlad, was imprisoned in the top floor of the Vlad castle.
There was also the pretense of keeping her under guard there.

Because there was the fear of the former servants of the Vlad house coming to rescue Seras, the former head of guards Gigi was entrusted with the castle's defense. It was because he was the one with the most knowledge of the terrain inside and outside the castle.
Just in case, there were also 30 of the Vampire house's magicians ranked B-minus and over prepared for defense. Pylkkänen was not so dumb as to leave the defense to a traitor such as Gigi.

As their wages were paid from Count Dan Gate Vlad's fortunes, the brothers' pockets were barely hurting.

Seemingly having been thinking of something, Gigi knocked on the door to the room leading to the dining hall with his usual unfriendly face.

"…… Excuse me."

When he entered the room, the patriarch of the Vampire house Pylkkänen and his brother Ravino were eating meat while making loud [munch munch] noises. The elder brother was rotund and fat, while in contrast, his younger brother was thin and lanky.

This was the place where Count Dan, Lady Seras, and their daughter Chrisse used to amicably enjoy their meals, surrounded by their servants. Gigi knew of those days of gentle atmosphere and pleasant conversations.

For that reason, he was the one who felt the biggest gap with the two pigs currently devouring their meals before him, but he did not say a word of it and fulfilled his role as the head of guards.

"I will be delivering today's report on Lady Seras Gate Vlad. Will it be alright?"
"I don't mind, continue."

With Pylkkänen's permission, he continued his report.

"She's taking her meals properly as usual, and is fine physically. If I dare say so, she seems to be lacking in exercise. She has ceased acting violently and is quietly abides by our orders, but she hasn't lost the shine in her eyes. She is probably saving up strength and looking for a chance to escape."
"Hmph, she's cheeky for a woman. My brother really has bad eyes for women, I'm appalled."
"Indeed, elder brother."

The younger brother was sucking up to his brother with his words.

"Also, I have the report from the slave house that the transport of Dan Gate Vlad had been completed without problems."

Gigi continued his report, not showing any reactions.

"Hmph, this way he won't ever set foot on Demon Continent soil ever again. Fool that he is, he is still my blood-related brother, so I won't take his life with my own hands. He should be thankful for that."

“Indeed, elder brother.”

Actually, it’s not that they felt afraid that Dan would break out of his magic prevention choker by his own power and come back to them for revenge, but they didn’t have the courage to kill him themselves, so the reality was that they sold him as a slave because of that reason.

Simply because the patriarch of the vampire house Pylkkänen and his brother Ravino were small fry.

The former butler Merry and the others had already found out that Dan was sold as a slave.
They failed to take him back.
But they still hadn’t given up.

If only they could save Seras from confinement, Dan could return to them using his own strength.
This is what they strongly believed.

So they desperately tried to rescue her, but no matter if they did day or night attacks all of them ended in failure.

“In order to break their spirits, we’ll need Chrisse.”
“Indeed, elder brother.”

By simply increasing the rescue targets to two people it would make the objectives harder to fulfill.
Also, in order to make the mother, Seras, do as she’s told, there is nothing more effective than her child.
Then even if in the one in a million chance Dan came back, they could prevent him from doing anything by holding his daughter hostage.

“Then have you finally found Chrisse’s whereabouts?”
“…. No, that is…”
“You still haven’t found her!? Why couldn’t you even find ONE girl, and a good for nothing that couldn’t even use magic, at that!”
“Probably she had somebody’s help and left the continent…”
“Then catch her, go all around the world if necessary! You blockhead!”

Pylkkänen took hold of a plate with half-eaten meat in it and threw it

at Gigi.

The patriarch's half-eaten meat splattered on his face and clothes, but Gigi's expression did not change in the least.

Pylkkänen let out a yell.

"Listen, you now have no other place to go but here. If I threw you out the former servants with a grudge on you would stab you in the back and kill you. If you don't want to happen then give me some results! Understood!?"
"…. Understood. I shall make certain to bring Chrisse-ojousama to patriarch-sama."

Gigi slowly bowed his head.
While they were having that exchange, there was a knock on the door.

Gigi's next in command, a beast race man, entered the room alone.
He whispered in Gigi's ear.

"…. Patriarch-sama. It seems like Merry is organizing a large group planning a rescue operation at the harbor town."
"Tch, those idiots again… Gigi, go take your men and kill Merry and his gang. Be careful not to touch anyone from the other families."
"Patriarch-sama, this might be a diversion. They had done so many attacks but this is the first time they started one so openly. It's a trap to attack us with a flying column while our defenses are being shorthanded."
"Don't make me say it again! Our castle is strengthened by the Vampire house's magicians in and out! Go take your men and kill those fools already! Or maybe you'd rather be kicked out of this castle right now!?"
"….. My apologies. I will immediately face them with my men."

Gigi bowed his head politely and left the dining room with his subordinate in tow.

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—Lute's POV—

It was one in the morning and even the plants had become quiet.

Defenses were laid out with the castle in the center.
It's as if the enemy were proclaiming [we're on guard against any attack from outside].

This is all going as we wanted it to.

Merry-san and the others gathered at the port town as a diversion to draw the enemy's eyes.
Then as planned, they were wary of attacks from the outside.
The plan is for Snow and I to use a passage that leads inside the castle and rescue madam.

The one to get in touch with the vigilant Merry-san and the others was one of ojousama's friends—the Lamia, Muir Head.

According to Karen, it seems that she is the best at catching people's eyes.
It's surely because she's a snake, right?

Thanks to her the details of the plan safely reached Merry-san.

"But I thought they would take more people to Merry-san's side. Well, this much is still within expectations."

Beast race men were riding horned horses out of the castle.
They proceeded towards the harbor town.

The ones left in the castle was probably the vampire house—the magicians and men confident in their abilities.

Right now, the place we're returning to was in the middle of the woods behind the castle.
I was in the middle of getting as close to the castle as I possibly could and spying on the situation. Because I had finished what I needed to do, I retreated back to the log cabin in the middle of the woods.

After about one hour I was back at the small cabin.
Inside the log cabin, Snow and Meiya were already waiting.
Since there were only these two that had bad relations with each other (though it's just Snow hating Meiya…) there was a delicate and difficult

atmosphere.

When I appeared, their faces brightened up in several senses of the term.

“Welcome back! Lute-sama!”
“Welcome back Lute-kun. How is the castle?”

“I’m back. They took the bait as planned. How are your preparations?”
“I’ve finished laying down the last of the traps in the woods. Chrisse-chan is ready, too.”
“I’ve finished my preparations as well. I can go any time.”

“All right. Well then Snow, should we begin our preparations.”
“Un, all right.”

Snow and I skillfully put on the equipment that were laid down on a rough table.

I was already wearing all-black clothes.

I put in two AK-47 banana magazines in each of the belt pouches hanging from my waist.
I also put a magazine in each magazine pouch attached to my vest.

I loaded the AK-47 with a magazine and pulled the cocking handle. One bullet made its way to the firing chamber.
I equipped a knife on my waist.

In my previous life, I think the number of assault rifle magazines prepared by army infantrymen [one loaded on the gun] + [6 spares].

I loaded one on the gun and prepared 6 spares, for a total of 7.
Which is about the average number.

Snow pushed the [S&W M10 4-inch] and [S&W M10 2-inch] into holsters hanging from her waist and breast.
The cylinders had of course been loaded with bullets.
Because I was busy with work on the sniper rifle, I had no time to make her

her own AK-47, so I handed over my revolver.
With this Snow became a dual-wielding gunner.

Snow had 2 speedloaders in both pockets. (6 bullets × 2. By the way, speedloaders are accessories that arrange bullets into a circle that allow revolvers to be reloaded more quickly.)
On the vest that she wore just like I did, a loader called a [speed strip] was put in.
Compared to the speedloader that arranges the bullets in the same circular shape as the cylinder, the [speed strip] arranges 6 bullets with their primers down in a line.

The speed strip is a product that overturned the concept of unwieldiness. As a result, it became as thin as the average auto-pistol magazine and could even be carried in hand. As its weakness, loading bullets became a little bit slower but that can be compensated with the speedloaders.

Snow also had a knife equipped on her waist.
She was also shouldering a small sack.

Our bullets had a little bit of the heads removed from them and a thin piece of silver stuck in.
Silver is deadly poison to vampires.

The combined amount of our armaments is, by simple calculation, just enough to be able to kill all the guards in the castle.
However our goal in the end was madam's rescue. We didn't intend to massacre all the castle guards in the least.

The sky was cloudy and there was no light from the stars.
There was no signs of rain going to fall, either.
It was the perfect weather for a surprise attack.

I stretched my hand towards the log cabin's fireplace.
I had already examined the gimmick that opens the hidden passage as soon as I arrived at the cabin.

I strongly pushed on one part of the fireplace's interior wall.
Like in the fireplace inside the residence, one of the bricks in the flooring

rose up. When I carefully pulled it up, it revealed an iron handle from behind it.

I took hold of the handle and opened the cover to the hidden passage with all my strength.

Firstly I poked just my head inside to check the situation.

"….. All right, there seems to be no problems."

There was nothing on the dust piled up in the passage besides my footprints from when we left the castle, showing that nobody had used this hidden passage besides me.
The patriarch of the vampire house did not notice this hidden passage.

I entered the passage first, followed by Snow.
After we went in, Meiya replaced the hidden passage's cover, and headed for her post.

"We should go then, Snow. Tell me if anything strange happens."
"Un, alright, Lute-kun."

We talked to each other then started off on the hidden passage towards the castle.

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Last time, I was carrying ojousama, and a one-way trip took 1 hour.
With me and Snow on foot, it took about 50 minutes.
We didn't activate body strengthening to avoid notice from the guards on the surface.

Magicians are sensitive to magic power.
Which is why it is hard to kill a magician through a surprise attack using magic.
Since they could detect the magic power before the attack happens.

If on the off chance we were detected here by the guards on the surface, then the surprise attack will be a failure.

Even though we were not using body strengthening we felt almost no fatigue since we were just walking normally.

Once we reached the end of the passage I had Snow get up the stairs and check on the situation outside.
She had better nose and ears than humans for being a white wolf.
I wanted her to confirm that there was no sign of life on the other side of the door.

Snow touched her thumb with her index finger, and stretched out the other fingers.
It was the hand signal for [OK].
It was decided beforehand that once we're here we won't talk but instead use hand signals for communication.

I had Snow learn hand signals for that purpose.
This was one of those.

I switched places with her and pushed up the door to the hidden passage.
I temporarily handed the AK-47 over to Snow.

If it's just opening the door with just pure strength and not body strengthening, then I'm the best one for the job.
A loud, heavy grinding sound filled the place.

As the vanguard, I first poked my head out and confirmed the situation with my eyes.

….. no signs of people as far as I could see.
The dining room I had become so familiar with until a few months ago spread out before me.

I lifted the door, trying to make as little noise as possible, and infiltrated the castle.
I put the cover down and called Snow over.
She entered the dining room and handed the AK-47 over.

This time Snow went ahead of me, listening for signs of people across the door.

Moving inside the castle, I had Snow take the lead. She's the best one to work in the dark, using her nose and ears to quickly detect signs of people.

Ojousama and I made a detailed map of the castle, and had Snow memorize it.
We decided that I could take over the lead and change the route depending on the situation.

Just in case, I put the fireplace cover back on.

With the [S&W M10 2 inch] she was so familiar with in hand, Snow opened the door to the corridor, looked left and right, and called me over.

The two of us carefully walked the corridor, making almost no sound of footsteps.
It was because of the boots I specially made for this day.

In order to keep it from making sounds when I walked, I glued soft monster material to the soles. I inserted a plate made of magic liquid metal to the toe tips so they made good protective shoes.
Of course, if we ran with them they would certainly make sounds, but so long as we walked it was quiet. To start with, so long as we're far away they wouldn't notice.

We went towards the tower while minding our surroundings.
The entrance to the tower where madam was kept is roughly on the opposite side of the castle from where the dining room was.

The tower entrance was located underground.
You go one floor down via a stairway inside the castle, go through a door, continue on and there will be another door, if you open that door, go up the tower's spiral staircase, and open the door at the top, you will reach the VIP room where madam is kept.

It seemed to have originally been a room where they kept royal or elite noblemen as prisoners.
The bricks the tower was made of were specially-made, Mages' Association produced anti-magic bricks.

It seems to deflect magic over a certain amount.

Because the Mages' Association monopolized its production, it was several times more expensive than regular bricks.

Due to those bricks, it is virtually impossible to attack the tower with magic from the outside and rescue the prisoner inside.

If for instance you wanted to destroy the tower, you need to use large-scale magic that exceeds the capacity of the anti-magic bricks.
You'll need something so powerful it'll destroy the prisoner inside with it.
If your intent was assassination that wouldn't be a problem, but rescue is another matter entirely.

Snow, who went ahead stretched her hand out fully and extended her palm.
The signal for 'Stop'.

She then wrapped her left index finger and thumb around the wrist of her right hand that was holding her revolver, with the other fingers outstretched. The sign for 'Enemy'.
She let go of her wrist and extended 2 fingers.
In other words, it looks like there were 2 people on patrol coming our way.

She questioned me with the signal for 'Battle'.
I shook my head.

To let the patrol pass, we opted to hide under cover while holding our breath.
I hid under a desk with a flower vase on it, and Snow hid behind a metal full-body armor.

"…. sheesh, I can't do this, going on patrol this late."
"Quit complaining. This is your job. It's fine so long as we get paid."
"Well, getting paid is certainly good, but they're working us rough."

A 2-man group appeared as they turned the corner grumbling.
Now that they've come this far I can hear their conversation with my own ears.

"There there, I'll take you out for a drink next time, after I get paid. I found a nice place."

“A nice place, huh. A nice place for you is probably someplace you can go gambling.”
“Don’t say that. It’s hard if I go there alone. You can drink as much as you like, okay.”
“‘It’s hard to go there alone’, what are you, a kid?”

The men passed by us, laughing, and turned the next corner.
After a short while the painful silence returned and we got out from our hiding places.

“!?”

As Snow got out from her hiding place, her arm lightly knocked the metal armor.
That moment the armor’s long battleaxe started to slant, and fell down towards the floor.

I slung the AK-47 to my back and dived!
I barely made it and caught the long axe as it was about to fall on the floor and make a loud clang.
We let out a sigh in relief.

After putting the axe back in its original stand I lightly pulled on Snow’s ear.
She put her hands together in apology.

We got our grips together and continued.

Snow ordered me to stop.
We were on a straight path with nothing in it.
If we continued down this path, turned right, continued again, and turned left, we would reach the tower’s underground entrance.

Snow called me over so she could talk to my ear instead of using hand signals.

(*Lute-kun, this hallway is rigged with a barrier.*)
(*Barrier?*)
(*There’s a magic device you surround your bed with when you make camp in the middle of a trip. When an animal crosses the bounded space it makes*

a loud sound only the user can hear to let them know.)

If I'm not mistaken, 3 years ago those fake adventurers also drove some stake-looking things into the ground when we made camp.
I recalled a difficult trauma.

But I'm glad I had Snow go ahead to be sure.
If there were magic traps there's no way I would notice.

(*You think you can disarm it?*)
(*No problem, but it'll take some time, is that alright?*)
(*How much time do you need?*)
(*Probably about 5 minutes, I think.*)
(*Fine if it's that much… Don't use magic, okay. They'll notice you.*)
(*I know that of course.*)

Snow put down the hammer to her revolver and holstered that favorite gun of hers.
In order to disarm the trap she crouched down on a corner of the floor.

There were some stake-looking things put on the left and right walls.
Looks like they're the barrier devices Snow mentioned.

…… 3 minutes into disarming the traps, Snow suddenly stood up.
She gripped her right wrist with her left hand, stretching out 2 fingers—The patrols roaming the castle are headed our way!

This is a totally straight hallway, and there's no room to hide.
With the sole exception of a large vase where about 2 children could fit in.

Not having any other choice, we hurriedly hid inside the vase.
Though I said 2 children could fit inside, it's still a vase after all.
There was no space inside, and Snow and I had to hug facing each other.

I could feel the sensation of her grown up soft chest through her vest and cartridges.

No time to fully enjoy the sensation, footsteps and the sound of conversation can be heard even inside the vase.

"Did you really see a person's shadow?"
"Yeah, I trust my eyes. I only caught a glimpse but I definitely saw something move."
"But the magicians and our friends are fortifying the outside, not even a rat should be able to get in. How did they get in here."
"Hell if I know."

The two continued their conversation.
They seem to be on guard from surprise attacks because they saw something.
But they couldn't find any shadow anywhere.

"…. Looks like you're seeing things after all."
"But I'm pretty sure I saw a shadow moving."

"It looks like we're going to get through this safely."
I unintentionally let out a sigh of relief.

Suddenly, my eyes met with Snow's while we were still hugging each other. Her pink lips were there right before my eyes. There was the sweet scent of her breaths, and her pearl-white teeth. Because of her excessive charms, I unintentionally drew my head back to take some distance.

clunk–

"Who goes there!"
[[!?]]

I had misjudged the distance and the back of my head hit the vase, making a light sound!
Of course, the patrol duo noticed and called out.
Snow's blameful gaze is painful.

They faced towards the direction of the sound–the vase and raised their voices.

"Oi, is there somebody in there?"

There were the sound of footsteps coming close.

Snow asked with her eyes, [Are we going for it now?]
However, the tower entrance is still quite a long way off. Still, we're definitely going to be found as we are. I guess it's sink or swim now…?

The footsteps were coming even closer.

"Squeak"
"Uwaa! What the… it's a rat?"

It seems that a rat appeared from behind the vase and scurried away.
The tension between the two men loosened.

"Looks like you saw a rat's shadow. Never thought your eyes would be *too* good, eh."
"Hahaha, that's for sure. But the higher-ups told us not to let even a rat pass through. This means we're doing our jobs right, huh?"
"Right."

The men laughed as they resumed their patrols.
Snow and I each let out a sigh of relief simultaneously.

I never thought I'd really be owing favor to a rat. Thanks to it I was able to keep my head.

After confirming they had taken their distance from us, Snow signalled that it was okay to come out.
We vacated the vase, taking care not to make any sound.

This time, Snow returned the favor and pulled my ear.
I pressed my hands together in apology, like she did a while ago.
Then, Snow once again went to work disarming the barrier.

The barrier was disarmed after about 3 minutes from when she resumed work on it.
Due to it being a cheap item, it's structure was rather simple, and it wasn't too difficult to render it inoperable.
We're lucky they're not ones intended for indoor security.

We gathered back our spirit and went for the tower entrance.
We turned right, went straight, and there was a door to our left.

Snow stopped to a halt.
She told me with a hand signal that there were 2 people from their scents, men, probably carrying magic-boosting staves. She was able to judge all that from the scent of the special wood.

I signalled her back that we're going to break in here at once.
Snow will handle the guard on the left, I will handle the one on the right.

As we had decided beforehand, we were to go all out with our magic and run up the tower in one stroke.
It was a race against time.

Snow gripped her beloved gun tightly.
I also made sure of my grip on the stock of my AK-47, and counted down with my left hand.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1–

"Go!"
"!?"

We immediately gave our bodies an assist with body strengthening.
We jumped out from the cover of the corridor and aimed the AK-47 and revolver at our respective targets.

Chapter 045 – Blooming

The enemies were taken aback by our sudden attack, but as you would expect from someone entrusted to guard the entrance to the tower where madam is, they were magicians.

They reflexively constructed defense barriers.
From the level of their skills I figured they were magicians of at least rank B.

But without minding that, I selected full-automatic fire and pressed the trigger.
Bracing for the muzzle flash, sound of gunfire, and recoil, I aimed at the enemy's leg.
The man on the right had prepared a defense barrier but it was easily pierced.

"Gyaa!!"

Fresh blood spurted out from the enemy's leg.

In my vision that had gone slow-motion thanks to visual strengthening, I noticed that Snow had hit the man on the left she was in charge of with the S&W revolver, but it was repelled by his defense barrier.
Looks like he released quite some magic and built a strong one in an instant.

Sheesh, this guy is well-prepared.

Still pressing my AK-47's trigger, I slid to the side. With the bullets being shot in full automatic, they found their way inside the enemy.

"Gugaa…h!!!"

Though the barrier was effective against 9mm bullets, it stood no chance against the 7.62mmR. The barrier was easily pierced, and the man was shot through the leg.

“Yo, you bastards! How did you get in here—Baah!?”

The man I shot down earlier started raising his voice, but Snow immediately kicked him unconscious.
She also likewise kicked the other man unconscious.

Of course, I noticed her move and already stopped my firing.
As childhood friends who were left in the orphanage on the same day and lived together, harmony is our specialty.

While popping the empty bullets out of the cylinder and reloading it from the magazine, Snow called out to me.

“Lute-kun! The lock please!”
“Leave it to me!”

[What was that sound!?]
[An intruder!? Oi, what are the guys outside doing!]
[It’s the tower! The tower is under attack!]

We heard men’s voices from throughout the castle.
They noticed the presence of intruders from the strange sound (gunfire) and the magic power from body strengthening.
They knew all too well that the tower where madam is would be the target .
For a castle this well defended, not even an idiot would invade for the money and goods.

It would’ve been best if we immediately opened the door and went into the tower… but the problem lies with the door.
The door was bulky and made of metal, and it had a lock attached to an iron bar as thick as a child’s arm. The wall around the door was of course made of anti-magic bricks.

Normally the gatekeepers would be holding the keys, but as a precaution against intruders they would often hold identical dummy keys.
There was no time to try each and every one in turn.

In other words, to break this door open without a key within a short time, you’ll need magic powerful enough to either destroy the metal door or the anti-magic bricks.

But there was no time to chant the spell for that.
In the first place, if you use magic poorly, even if you could break the door open, the magic power released would be high enough to destroy the area surrounding the door, burying the passage. In the end, you wouldn't be able to get in.

Other than magic, another way to break the lock open is by cutting it using a sword, but you need sufficient skill and power for that.
The door was made of heavy metal, and the lock was also well made.

It was at the level where only a famous master could do something about it.
There was nobody around us with that kind of skill.
There was the possibility of using body strengthening and a heavy axe to forcibly cut the door apart. If we go back a bit we could take the axe from the metal armor…. but while we did that the guards would have gathered here.

However, in my hands I hold an AK-47.
It had the power to pierce through an NIJ (National Institute of Justice) [Level III A++]-ranked bulletproof vest.

It would be impossible for normal bullets to pierce through the heavy metal door, but the lock isn't so much of a problem.

I aimed at the lock and fired in semi-auto mode.

BANG!

The lock easily flew apart.

Snow and I went inside the doorway as if diving in.
Snow pushed the open door closed, put her beloved gun away, and turned both her hands toward the door.

"Hark my call o dragon of ice and snow. Let forth a world of glaciers before me! Permafrost!"

Ice, it was melded magic of Ice.
At elementary level you can use 1 kind.

At intermediate level you can meld 2 kinds.
At the advanced level you can meld over 3 kinds of magic.

The door was jammed with ice from the inside.
Now even if the lock was broken, they won't be able to get inside so easily.
It was plenty enough to buy time with.

I heard Snow call from behind me and destroyed the lock on the next door.
Right then, my magazine ran out of bullets so I replaced it.
I packed fresh bullets into the magazine.

I opened the door, let Snow inside, and ran up the stairs in one stroke with body-strengthening-enhanced strides.

In less than a minute I reached the top floor of the tower where madam was imprisoned.
The door looked sturdy but unlike the two at the bottom of the tower it was made with careful workmanship.
It wasn't hard to break through for being an ordinary door.

"Madam, are you alright? It's Lute!"
[Lute!? You came to save me on your own?]
"Let's save the details for later! Please step away from the door for a moment. It's dangerous to be in front of the door so please move aside."
[All right.]

I broke through the door using my body-strengthened shoulder.
The door was blown into the room, hinge and all.
Inside the room there was Lady Seras Gate Vlad who I hadn't seen for several months, since Karen's surprise party.

She was wearing an undecorated one-piece dress that looked like pajamas.
She looked a little lean, maybe from lack of exercise.
Furthermore, her breasts seemed to have grown bigger.

However, as far as I can see there were no traces of her having been hurt or tortured.
I stroked my chest in relief.

“Lute, have you really come to save me?”
“Ma, madam!?”

Overcome with emotion, madam hugged me from the front like she did the day we first met.
My face was buried in her plump bosom.
It felt good, and the scent of a grown woman, unlike Snow or ojousama, made me feel dizzy.

Madam released her hands off me, and then she looked at Snow with interest.

“Oh my, this person here is?”
“My fianceé, Snow.”
“This is the first time I heard that Lute had a fianceé! Nice to meet you, my name is Seras Gate Vlad. I am really thankful to you for coming to save me.”
“Nice to meet you, I’m Lute-kun’s fianceé, Snow. It is I who should thank you for saving Lute-kun’s life.”
“Not at all, in fact I’m the one who should be thanking him. Even my husband called him a good purchase. By the way, I sensed some strong magic power from below, was it you? It might be a little impertinent of me, but could you kindly tell me your rank?”
“I’m A-minus ranked. The S-ranked magician Freezing Witch-sama gave me the nickname [Witch of Ice and Snow].”
“Oh my, that’s amazing. Reaching A-minus rank at such an age, and to be given a nickname by the S-ranked magician Freezing Witch-sama, too. Not even royalty could do that.”
“I’ve considered that I might not live up to the name, but this and that happened so I received the name.”
“I wonder if you could tell me about it if you have time. I love adventure stories like that. My husband—Dan Gate Vlad also had all sorts of fun stories. The time when he slept in the dungeon was most amusing—”
“Madam! Snow! Please leave the talk for later. We’re really short on time here!”

The uproar from below had become louder.
They had started to use strong magic that even I could sense.

Snow took down the bag she was carrying and took out a white clay-like blob.

"Madam, can I have you squat down for a little bit?"

She followed Snow's instructions.
She started covering the magic prevention collar wound around madam's neck with the clay-like material.

The magic prevention collar served three functions.
First—While within visual range, the one powering the collar can make it shrink so as to suffocate the wearer.
Second—It could give the user information on the wearer's whereabouts.
Third—Were the collar to be forcibly taken off, the wearer shall be killed by the magic applied on the collar.

This clay-like material served to disable the first function.
It was something given to us by Meiya, she guaranteed it's effectiveness.

Next, as long as the collar was worn, madam's location would still be known and she would be continuously pursued. If the collar were to be clumsily removed, she would die.

However, according to Meiya, it seems that it wouldn't be hard to remove the collar given the right tools, time, and skills.
Therefore the plan is for us to take madam, cross over the forest 1 km behind the castle, and take her on a covered coach we parked on the main road.
Special unlocking tools that Meiya brought in were already set up inside the covered coach.

Of course, the genius magic device developer Meiya, who had the skills to unlock the magic prevention collar, is on standby inside.
What's left to do is to just run away until the collar is unlocked.

I took out a softball-sized sphere from Snow's backpack and put it aside.
I unfastened the AK-47's magazine and replaced it with the one in my lower back pocket.
These are the special items I prepared for this day.

“Lute-kun, preparations all done.”
“I’m done, too. Snow, proceed as planned please.”
“Roger!”

Still with the backpack on, Snow increased her body strengthening.

“Madam, if you’ll excuse me.”
“Oh my oh my .”

Snow picked up madam in a princess carry.
I gave her instructions as she was being carried.

“Madam, it might be a little suffocating but please hold your breath when I say so.”
“Uhuhuhu, this reminds me of when my husband princess-carried me for the first time…. Yeah, that was the night we first met each other on the boat. We fell in love at first sight that day.”
“Madam!”
“Uhuhu, alright. When Lute gives the signal I’m to hold my breath, right.”
“Please. Well then let’s go Snow!”
“OK, any time!”

I boosted my body with body strengthening.
With the AK-47 in full auto I barraged the wall of stacked bricks with bullets.
Once that magazine is finished, I took out a second one and unleashed another barrage.

The ammo I barraged the wall with is a special kind—armor piercing rounds.

The usual bullet cores were made of ersatz-lead, but this time the cores were made of ersatz-tungsten wrapped in ersatz-lead. A thin jacket is wrapped around it to make the cartridge.

Armor piercing rounds were built to punch through materials like iron plates.

No matter how “anti-magic” these bricks are, they shouldn’t be able

stand against something that can go through iron plates.
I made bullet holes around a section of wall about the size a person could go through.

"One-two!"

I covered my entire body in magic power for just 10 seconds and did a roundhouse kick.

The bunch of bricks danced in the air and fell down.
The sound of the bricks falling was heard throughout the castle.

At this point I've used up half of my magic power.

I replaced the magazine and picked up the softball-sized sphere, then jumped out towards the castle walls through the hole in the tower.
Snow was carrying madam.
Deceleration and body strengthening had of course been handled by her magic.

It was dark down below, but the castle walls could be faintly seen, we then jumped on top of it.
It wasn't the time to be lingering about, but there were of course guards that were standing watch outside gathered beneath the walls.

It was obvious given the flashy way we made our escape route.
This is where the ball I prepared comes in handy.

"Madam! Please hold your breath!"

Just before I jumped down the castle wall, I gave madam the signal.
There were the guards on watch down below. I forcefully threw the ball in my hand at them.

The ball hit the ground and exploded.
A huge cloud of smoke came out.

"A smokescreen!? This much is no big deal, I can… *cough*! *cough*!?"
"M, my body…"

「これは銀か！？」
“Is this silver!?”

There was silver dust mixed in with the smoke.
Silver is deadly poison to vampires.
The silver filled their lungs by being breathed in.

The moment we landed, we swiftly ran amidst the confusion.

We headed towards the forest 1 km away.
Once we reached that place, it would be our win.
500 meters remaining.

“!? Lute-kun! Get behind me!”

Snow’s warning.
Flame swords, water spears, and lightning axes danced, blocking our way.
Still holding on to madam, Snow hid me behind her back and opened a barrier.
It blocked all the magic attacks.

Ten-odd men appeared out of the shadows where the magic was fired from.

…tch!?
“I see, so the ringleader was Lute. I thought it was too cunning for Merry.”

It was the first time I saw him in months.
Gigi-san’s figure almost hadn’t changed.
He looked just like the time when he was happy about ojousama going outside in order to get over her trauma.

That Gigi-san who shouldn’t have changed pointed out my mistakes like he usually did.

“But you’re too naïve. You overdid the acting you used as diversion. Intelligence is best when you make them think and consider and find out about it. That’s because intelligence they happen upon by themselves is one that they would believe in the most.”

The men, mainly of the beast race, fanned out behind our back, encircling us.
They were probably the men in Gigi-san's direct command.
Their eyes shined with a hired professional's light, absolutely not willing to let madam escape.

Under the lead of Gigi-san, they set about to block our way.
Despite supposedly standing in front of me as enemies, I still considered that it might be a lie, that he might be a fake.

"…… Why are you over on that side, Gigi-san? For what reason did you betray master, madam, Merry-san and the servants, and Ojousama?"

The first words out of my mouth after several months were not ones of denigration, but questioning as to his motives.
I was sure that he was forced into betrayal because there was someone he know or a friend being held hostage.

Though he was taciturn and looked frightening, Gigi-san treasured the Vlad house more than anyone.
He crafted so many plans and chaperoned ojousama out of worry for her.
No way that kind of person would truly turn traitor.

But his reply was as usual, unrestrained and indifferent.

"I don't mind talking now, but are you sure? We're not your only enemies you know."

Gigi-san pointed behind me.
The smokescreen had cleared, and vampires who weren't swallowed by the fumes were closing in on us.
Wolf in the front gate, Vampire in the back.

"Lute-kun…"
"…. that's right isn't it. There's lots to do before asking your reasons. First I have to safely get out of here and lead madam to safety."
"If you can, that is."

Gigi-san and his men took a solid stance.
Behind us there were the vampires who escaped the smokescreen bearing

down on us.

Normally, one would think we had no way to escape.

However, I unhurriedly raised my left hand, waving it round and round, sending a signal.

The others besides Snow and I made dubious expressions, not knowing my intention.

“What’s this, signalling surrender? Then rather than that you should unhand the hostage and—gaaaah!”

There was a popping sound.
At the same time, the beastman standing beside Gigi-san collapsed on the spot.
There was a hole in his left thigh and blood splattering everywhere.

BANG.

“Gaaah!?”

Another man beside him collapsed in the same way, holding his leg.
This time it was the thigh on his right leg.

“Snow!”
“Got it!”

Only Snow and I was not bewildered and escaped the siege net through the hole created by the collapsed men.

“After them! Don’t let them escape!”

Only one, Gigi-san reacted to the sudden situation, and made the order to chase after us—

BANG.

A man who reflexively reacted to the order collapsed, holding his leg.

Another invisible attack.

Gigi concentrated magic power in his eyes, trying to firstly figure where the attack was coming from.

“!? Is that Ojousama!”

Then he noticed her a long way away, about 500 meters—on the boundary between the forest and plain grounds.

At that distance he couldn’t see her if it weren’t for the magical eyesight strengthening.
Ojousama was standing on one knee, holding a long, cylindrical weapon.

It was the kneeling shot position.
Every time she shoots, a [7.62mm×51 NATO round] came flying out at about 838 meters per second.

They didn’t know that.
They were not aware what kind of terrible monster they were now standing before….

It was the moment for the trump card on our side—of Chrisse Gate Vlad to bloom—!

Chapter 046 – Rifleman's Creed

Out in the distance, about 500 meters away, Chrisse was holding in her arms a long, black, cylindrical weapon.
Gigi saw it with his magically strengthened eyesight, and set out to give orders to his subordinates, but

BANG.

"GAAAAH!"

Another popping sound.
Almost immediately one of the vampires going after Lute collapsed, holding his stomach.
Hit by a bullet.

(*No mistaking it now. I don't know what magic or magic device it is, but seems she could strike from 500 meters away in the dark without any starlight.*)

Gigi calmly analyzed the situation, the impressive range and accuracy of the attack made him shudder even though he could feel no magic power from it.

(*Damn that cursed thing! Never in my long life have I seen anything like that. Chrisse-ojousama is going easy on us now so she only struck legs and stomachs, but just one shot of this to the head and it'll be instant death. We'll be killed before we noticed we're dead.*)

No matter how much Gigi concentrated, he could not perceive the flow of magic nor its outbreak. This is precisely why the magicians could be taken by surprise and killed without them knowing it.

The atrociousness of the weapon made the spine along Gigi's back shiver.

Luckily it didn't seem to be able to fire rapidly.
Everytime the popping sound is heard, Chrisse gave a pull on some lever-

like thing with her hand.
Another interlude, then another popping sound, that was proof of that.

Gigi immediately gave his orders.

“Enemy attack, distance is 500 meters! Attack is from unknown magic or magic device! No rapid fire! Half of you tend to the wounded, the other half follow me!”

Being professionals they immediately moved according to the head of guards, Gigi’s orders.

As ordered, half the men tended to the wounded, the other half went in pursuit of Lute.

The number of pursuers were ten-odd people, beastmen and vampires.
All of them were the surviving B-minus ranked magician strongmen.

“Don’t let her aim at you, move forward while making evasive moves!”

They proceeded to pursue Lute, moving left and right as if avoiding arrows, all according to Gigi’s orders.
The distance to the target is 200~250 meters.
Gigi’s group proceeded using zig-zagging movement to not let her aim at them, creating a bit of distance with the target. However, it is now still possible for them to catch up with this distance.

Furthermore, beastmen and vampires, who have night eyes, have the advantage in the dark forest.
Then there’s the magic prevention choker attached to Seras’ neck.
As long as she has that on her, no matter where she goes they will be aware of her location, and then there’s also magic that will kill her if she tries to take the collar off without using the special key.

Even if they could run an hour’s distance away, there’s no way Seras would slip away.
Moreover, their fighting force is Lute, Chrisse, and the white magician—Snow.

Gigi, from his senses honed through the long years, was able to figure out Snow's value from her magic power and her behavior as a mage.
She was an annoying opponent, but not one they couldn't defeat as a group.

Lute and Chrisse had no talent as magicians, but they were armed with unusual weapons.

(*Invisible attacks are certainly troubling, but it was* that *strong. There's no way they could keep using it forever.*)

As Gigi expected, there was a limit to Lute and Chrisse's bullets.
They believed that they could take them down with the quantity of their magic power.

Even if the enemy had prepared more forces, it would be enough to hold them back when the time comes.
It would be enough if they bought time until their fallen comrades recovered.

(*In other words, this escape drama is just a game of tag that we're bound to win from the start.*)

Gigi clenched his teeth, glaring at the backs of the escapees.

Lute, Snow, and Seras entered the forest.
After a delay Chrisse stopped her firing, and followed behind them.

About 200 meters behind them, Gigi and his troops stepped into the forest.
For Lute, this is a forest that he knew really well, but for Gigi, this place is practically his own backyard.

There should be no such thing as professionals who don't understand a forest that was right beside them.

"GUAAAH!"

However, the first screams came up from among the pursuers.

"What happened!?"

“M, my leg! There’s something sticking into my leg!”

There was a pitfall trap containing thin blades with barbs attached that dug halfway into the beastman’s lower leg through his leather shoes.
Although they were thin, they were strong. They easily pierced through sole and foot just by the force of his body weight.

“GUEEE!?”
“T, there’s one here too! Darda’s squirming while holding his throat! T, this one is…. thin metal lines stretched out!?”
“Goddammit! They, they’ve turned the forest full of traps!”

The young vampire man called Darda was shedding fresh blood from his throat and fell to the ground writhing.
His allies used healing magic on him in a hurry, but it seems there was silver in the traps.

His allies hurriedly made him drink anti-silver drug.
Not even 10 meters into the forest, and they already had 2 casualties.

The forest that should’ve been like their own backyard had been laid out with traps like the jungles of Vietnam.
Gigi chided his panicked subordinates.

“Get a hold of yourselves! These are amateur traps! We won’t get caught if we moved carefully!”

This is a trick they’ve used, and others used on them before.
Slowing down the enemy’s advance by laying traps on their path.
Gigi and his men took careful steps and proceeded, avoiding the traps.

—BANG.

“GUAAAA!”

The man carefully probing and disarming the traps was shot down in the shoulder with a [7.62mm×51 NATO round] and collapsed.

“Get down! It’s the invisible attack from earlier! Get down!”

Gigi's men obeyed his orders and got down on the spot, but the screams didn't stop.

—BANG.

"AAAAAH!"

—BANG.

"GAAA!"

"WHYYY! We got down but why do the attacks still hit!"

The man next to Gigi shouted out, half in panic.

(*Ojousama is probably on a high spot and looking down towards us.*)

There were gentle sloped hills in the forest.
It wasn't hard to hit even a prone target when one aims from a high point.

(*The one thing I don't understand is how in the world could she accurately pinpoint our positions in the dark night without starlight…*)

Like lightning, a flash ran through Gigi's mind.

"!? Stop your body strengthening! She's aiming by detecting your magic power!"

By Gigi's orders, the men immediately cut off their magic.
The reason is obvious if they calmly thought about it.
Chrisse's magic power was used from a distance and in small quantities so they couldn't detect it. It was hard to find her from where Gigi and his men were.

Gigi and his men stood up once again, and proceeded forwards while on the lookout for traps… however,

—BANG.

"GUAAAAA!"

The shoulder of the man next to Gigi was hit and fresh blood scattered everywhere.

“IT HURTS! IT HURTS! WHY?! I WAS SURE I CUT OFF MY MAGIC! WHY!?”
“Calm down! Calm down and use healing on yourself!”
“Nnn gigigigigi—”

The man put together all his concentration.
A whistling sound that froze the spine on Gigi’s back passed by the tip of his nose.

“AAAAAH!”

The leg of the man who was about to apply healing jumped up.
It was because he was hit on the buttocks.

—BANG.

“AAAAAAH!!!”

Next, his other leg was shot.

“Goddammit! GODDAMMIT!!! WHY ONLY ME!! STOP IT!”

The man fainted, in tears, nose dripping, and drooling in agony from the pain he had never experienced before.

The terror was contagious.
This was a warning from Chrisse that she could torment all the men in the forest, including Gigi to death in the same way if she so chose—through the man who fainted in agony in front of their eyes.
She had plenty of reasons to want to do that.

The men’s morale visibly dropped.

With cold sweat running through his brow, Gigi thought about a question.

(*How could she accurately figure out our positions and launch attacks in the dark night without starlight?*)

There was no sign of her looking for them with magic.
They also didn't use magic so they shouldn't have been detectable…

(*!? That's right! She could have simply figured our positions out by eyesight!?*)

Gigi knew.
Chrisse's eyesight and night vision was outstandingly high even among vampires.
She was a talent, a prodigy, a genius who once shot down a fruit bat dancing in the dark night using a bow.
Now that she has that invisible long range magic attack device, she was like a fish in water.

Gigi was at last filled with terror right through to the core.

(*Ojousama has no talent!? You've got to be kidding me! She's more of a problem than Master!*)

Dan Gate Vlad was strong.
However, strong is all he was.
If Gigi had to fight Dan face to face, he would run away with all his might.

If he ran away and hid himself, he didn't have to worry about getting killed.
He was proud to possess the strength to be able to run away from Dan—from an A-ranked magician, a rank that only a few geniuses were able to reach.

(*But Ojousama's ability—her strength is more than that…!*)

From a long range and without any magic that could be sensed, she could deliver an attack that carried instant death.
He would never know when he would die!
No matter how strong he was, the moment he stopped running his head could crack open like a red strawberry being smashed.

In other words, when it comes to facing Chrisse, there was nothing else to do but shiver in fear of not knowing when he would be killed, even if he could run away.
It was obvious which one is more fearsome.

Not only Gigi, his subordinates also became aware of that truth, and trembled.
They did not know how soon she would pierce holes through their heads on a whim.

The hands of a god of death gently caressed the faces of everyone there.

The clouds parted and starlight shone through like a spotlight, illuminating one corner of the forest.
Under that light, Chrisse Gate Vlad was standing, holding her M700P.
Her distance from Gigi and his men was over 200 meters.

Hugging the M700P, she moved her throat that can't speak because of trauma, moving her lips as if singing a song.

Her voice could not be heard.
The men there were simply captivated by her, and stopped in their tracks.

Chrisse continued moving her throat and lips.

Gigi and his men didn't know.
The song she was singing to herself right now was something taught by Lute, the [Rifleman's Creed] chanted by the United States Marine Corps.

In his previous life, Hotta Youta—Lute was weak in English.
However, he was entranced by this [Rifleman's Creed] and worked with all his might to memorize it.

Then when he recited it to Chrisse, she was strangely captivated by it and memorized it as well.
She could not release her voice because of trauma, but she concentrated on chanting this [Rifleman's Creed], insisting that she be able do so accurately.

She chanted.

This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine

My rifle is my best friend. It is my life. I must master it as I must master my life

My rifle, without me, is useless. Without my rifle, I am useless. I must fire my rifle true. I must shoot straighter than my enemy who is trying to kill me. I must shoot him before he shoots me. I will……

My rifle and myself know that what counts in this war is not the rounds we fire, the noise of our burst, nor the smoke we make. We know that it is the hits that count. We will hit……

My rifle is human, even as I, because it is my life. Thus, I will learn it as a brother. I will learn its weaknesses, its strength, its parts, its accessories, its sights and its barrel. I will keep my rifle clean and ready. We will become part of each other. We will

Before God, I swear this creed. My rifle and I are the defenders of my family. We are the masters of our enemy. We are the saviors of my life

So be it, until victory is ours and there is no enemy

A young girl who could bestow death upon them sang soundlessly.

They had no idea what the young girl was whispering.
Her blonde hair sparkled beautifully under the starlight, her innocent childlike face was lovely, rousing one's protective instincts.
But she was holding in her arms a pitch-black magic weapon that could turn them into lumps of meat in an instant, hugging it tenderly like it was her own child.

White and Black.
Light and Darkness.
Life and Death.

The scene in that place was fantastic, giving them visions of all the world being in that place. It was awe-inspiring.

“HYAAAAAAAAA!!!”

Unable to hold back his fear, one of the men turned tail and broke into a run.

“L, like I’m letting myself get killed! This isn’t worth however much they’re paying me!”

He used body strengthening at full power on his legs, aiming to break out of the forest, but…

—BANG!

“GAAAAA!”

Chrisse mercilessly shot out his buttocks from behind.
No matter how much he used body strengthening, it wasn’t a technique that could outrun a bullet at twice the speed of sound.

Chrisse yanked the bolt.
Clink—the empty ammo cartridge fortuitously struck a stone buried on the ground, sounding the ending bell of the match.

Thick clouds once again hid the starlight.
Chrisse’s figure melted, disappearing into the darkness.

There was a brief silence.
Taking this as a chance, another of Gigi’s men made a reckless attempt to run away.

“…… GYAAAA!!!”

He tried to run swiftly like an arrow using body strengthening, and yet Chrisse’s bullet pierced his abdomen as if drawn there by a thread.
Chrisse will not allow anyone to run from this place.

Furthermore, the popping sound came from a greater distance than before.
Even while retreating, Chrisse was giving them an angry glare.

huff *huff* *huff*

Gigi's and his men's breathing became short and rough.
The cause was the fear they felt.

It was clearly not a game of tag they're bound to win.
They were cleverly led down to the monster's mouth—to a place of death.

(*But, we're not defeated yet. If we could pin down madam in the end then it would be our win.*)

So long as she was wearing the magic prevention choker, Gigi and the others could find out Seras' whereabouts any time.

(*First we should somehow get out of here. Then find out madam's location and launch an attack—*)

Gigi pulled together his battered down emotions, and switched his thoughts over.

As he was thinking about how to escape the forest, a light exploded high in the sky.
Unknown to Gigi, this was Lute's signal to Chrisse to withdraw, saying that [the collar is off].

After a short while, Chrisse's presence vanished completely.
It was about 30 minutes later that Gigi and his men realized this fact.

Chapter 047 – Vampire

Let us turn back the clock a little bit.

"Lute-kun are you okay? Should I slow down a bit?"
"I… I'm okay, I can still keep going."

We left ojou-sama to hold them back and cut through the forest.
My current magic power is at about a third left.
Even though Snow used magic while carrying the madam in her arms, I dont feel her magic power weakening.

This is the difference that having talent in magic makes..
The madam let out a worried sigh at us.

"If this choker could be removed, I could also run with my own legs."
"Dont be concerned, besides, we will be out of the forest soon."

Just like I said, we were finally out of the forest.
Jumping down from this vertical cliff, at the rendezvous point was a wagon stationed there.
Yoshi, just as we planned!

Inside the wagon, Meiya came to meet us.

"Welcome back Lute-sama! It seems you were able to rescue your benefactor safely."
"Meiya, I'll leave it to you. Snow come help her. Right now we are in the middle of the operation, so will you two please cooperate?"
"Muu, I understand."

My warning was to Snow in particular.
She pouted at my warning.

While I let out a sigh, the coachman whip the horse.
There was no reason to stay in this place forever.

Inside the wagon, Meiya started a conversation with the madam.

“Nice to meet you madam, I am Lute-kun’s first pupil Meiya Dragoon.”
“That’s very polite of you, I’m Seras Gate Vlad. I thank you for your assistance. Meiya — why is that genius magic tool developer is in the demon continent?”
“Everything is according to Lute-sama’s will..”
“Is Meiya-san also Lute’s fiancée?”
“En… Engaged!? no, no, such dreadness! however if such thing was proposed could I possibly refuse? Rather, I don’t have any reason to refuse!”

Meiya’s maiden face redden, and she fumbled around with her fingers.
No, enough with such talk, i wish you would start preparing to unfasten that magic prevention choker.

“Muu~~~ that’s wrong! This person is not Lute-kun fiancee! Don’t say bad things about Lute-kun!”
… She was badmouthing Lute-kun, too!”

Because of madam’s remark, Snow puffed her cheek.
Her remark also made Meiya collapse, like being hit in the head with a hammer.

“UuUu, at that time i have yet to be touched by Luke-sama’s magnificence, i was ignorant…. anyway, now i’ll be removing madam’s choker.”
“Choker? but if it’s not unlocked with the key, the magical curse will kill mel”
“However, if its left alone it will give away your location to the enemy.”
“Ooo, this choker also had that kind of functionality huh.”
“Yes, that’s why I don’t know when we are going to get attacked, so I need to remove it. Of course i am a genius follower of Lute-sama the magic tool developer Meiya Dragoon! This level of choker i could easily remove without any difficulty. Therefore do not be concerned.”

However, she added.

“Unlocking it would require approximately 30 minutes.”

Even with Meiya's level of expertise in magical tools and the special tools prepared it would still take 30 minutes….
Of course its impossible for an amatuer to unlock a magic prevention choker.

"Won't we get attacked while we're doing that?"
"It's alright. Right now, Chrisse-chan is keeping the enemy at bay!"

Snow energetically replied.
In madam's expression float a hint of worry.
Not for her own safety, but for her daughter.

"As I thought, that was not a mistake. Is that girl capable of keeping Gigi and the others at bay?"
"She can! Because Chrisse-chan had become very strong!"

To blow away madam worries, Snow cheerfully answered.
Both me and Snow had the same opinion.
Instead, I'm worried that she went overboard.

I believe the talent ojou-sama has, was more than just what imagined.

Especially in night battles.
The way that she could shoot out targets even with only her normal non-body-strengthened eyesight in the dark was, in a word, shocking.
In the previous world, a U.S. army sniper that could snipe game in the night is called a 'Vampire'."

Ojou-sama, who demonstrated the most power in night warfare is definitely a 'Vampire'

"So, let's start. Could you please lie down?"

As per Meiya instruction, madam lie down on the platform.

"Light please."

With Snow's magic, the wagon interior was illuminated.
Meiya begun to disassemble the choker with a tool in her hand.

—- just as she declared, the choker was unlocked in 30 minutes.
She then casually threw out the choker

“Lute-kun, signal Chrisse-chan to withdraw.”
“Leave it to me.”

Snow from the wagon stretch out her hand high.
A flashy bright magic explosion shot upward.

Around one hour later.
Gigi and the other, moved quickly toward the location of the magic prevention collar.
But, there they found only the magic prevention collar laying on the road.

They had let madam slip away.

▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼

The place we arrived in, is the residence of a magic stone dealer to whom Meiya is friendly with.
Coming back from the night battle, ojou-sama met her mother first time in a few months.

“…Tsu!”

Ojou-sama still in her field uniform, leapt straight for her mother’s chest after not having seen her for a long time.
Madam gently stroked her head.

“Thank you Chrisse. For saving mother.”
[Without everyone’s help, I can do nothing by myself.]

She wrote on the magic mini-blackboard.

“That’s right, isn’t it. Everyone, as representative of the Vlad house, I once again give you my thanks.”

Madam lowered her head to us, me, Snow and Meiya, in that place.

“Madam, as a butler of the Vlad house, it was only the natural thing to

do..”
“In that case, then the fact that our family was able to meet with Lute was really a godsend.”

“I have sent out word to Merry-san and the others about Madam’s safe extrication, but meeting with them would have to wait until after the reconciliation. It’s to prevent the enemy from finding out your whereabouts and coming to attack and abduct you and Ojousama again.”

The enemy is detestable, but beyond the fact that there are those watching the family feud from the side, we can’t afford to kill them all.
Now that there are no hostages on their side, they no longer had any hands to play.
After showing our power to deter them, we should find out Master’s whereabouts, and then once again we entrust our self to Master.

“It’s so. Although, what is the plan from here on? As I am safe now, my husband will be able to use all his power, but… I heard that he was sold as a slave to somewhere. We presently don’t have the power to keep those people in check.”
[Mother, do you know where father has been sold to?]

“No, I’m sorry, I’m a powerless mother.”
[That’s not true! But I wonder if father is okay…]
“You don’t need to worry about that. Its him after all, even if he receive a body blow from a dragon, there won’t be even a single scratch on him.”

Uwaa—, it’s so easy to imagine him to do that.

To change the atmosphere I spoke out.

“Since we have ojousama as a deterrent there won’t be any problems. Which is why I was thinking I’d like to open up negotiations with the enemy soon.”
“Chrisse?”
“Yes. She is our deterrent, our trump card.”

Lute turned to ojou-sama.

“By the way ojou-sama, were there any problems with the sniper rifle

you tried today?”
[The bullet’s powder still felt a bit weak. The trigger weight was also a little bit on the soft side and the bullets were a bit off from what I imagined, so please make the adjustments.]
“Guh, ce… certainly.”

Though I only worked on it for a short time, I did my best to complete the sniper rifle, but Ojousama still found things to criticize about it.

“I understand. Then I’ll make the adjustments until the day of the reconciliation. For now, please assume you will be using the current gun for the performance.”
[Okay.]

Meiya interrupted.

“It’s about time for sunrise soon. Shall I prepare a hot bath or some food ?”
“I’ll take you up on your offer then. Please prepare a bath. It’s been awhile since I had one with my daughter, you don’t mind do you, Chrisse?”
[Yes, mother.]

While smiling ojou-sama lifted up her mini board.

Allowing the mother-daughter pair to bond after their long separation, we took the tactful approach and left the room.

Chapter 048 – Reconciliation

About half a month after we rescued Madam.
Chrisse-ojousama and Madam's meeting place with the Vampire Clan has been decided.

The location is Chrisse-ojousama best friend's residence, Karen Bishop from centaur race.
It would take place in the training ground.

The training ground is 3 soccer fields wide.
As expected of weapon dealers.
Usually this place is used as a training ground for the private armies, but right now nothing is here.

On the training ground 4 simple chairs are set on opposing sides.
In front of the chief seat, a wooden table is placed.
On it was an unfamiliar scale, standing there conspicuously.

The seat on our side are occupied by Ojou-sama and Madam, on their back me, Merry-san and Mercè-san lined up.

At the opposing side the fat Vampire clan's patriarch Pylkkänen Vlad and the skinny Ravino sat there, on their backs Gigi-san and 2 others are standing there.
On the chief seat, Karen sat there, as a witness and moderator.

Normally, this kind of discussion would happen indoors.
But, on Vlad count house's suggestion, this time it will be held on an open ground.

The weather is cloudy as usual, but there is no wind and it is quite warm.
It seems that having a discussion outside won't have any unexpected drawback.

In the silence, Karen looked around, working as a moderator.

“Now, let begin the discussion between Vampire houses from the Vampire race. I karen from the horse clan will bear witness. in the case of not following the rules and violence is used, the party involved will be antagonized by the horse clan.”

In this regard, the Horse Clan is the top class fighting force.
There’s probably no one thinking of making the Horse Clan as enemies.

Pylkkänen the chief of Vampire clan raised his hand.

“And what if the Horse Family deliberately sides with the Vlad House in this discussion, hmm?”
“In the name of the horse clan i swear, absolute fairness will be assured. In the case of circumstances, compensation can be requested. And to prevent such cases to happen i’ve brought this [Scales of Truth.]”

[Scales of Truth.]

A Magic Tool.
There are feathers on both ends of the scale. One is white, one is black.
It is then balanced on the palm of the hand, it will judge the fairness of the person in charge, now that Karen had declared, if she supported Ojou-sama side, the white feather will sink. The opposite also hold true, if she supported the Vampire Clan, the black wing will sink. Other than that, the feathers won’t move.
It seems it was used a lot in the court.

“Can we confirm it?”
“Yes, certainly.”
“Oi, Ravino!”
“Yes, elder brother.”

The two men rise, checking whether or not the [Scales of Truth] was the real thing.

Looking at the backside, touching the wings, also confirming that magic are properly contained by holding it in the palm of the hand.
Satisfied, they returned to their seats.

“People of the Vlad House, have you confirmed?”

“We do not see any problems with it.”

Madam shook her head to accept.

“If so, we will begin to open this meeting.”

Karen holds the Scales of Truth on top of her palm.

“I Karen Horse hereby will disregard my personal feeling and will conduct this meeting in complete fairness.”

The Scale of truth glows. Of course the equilibrium remain undisturbed.
With this the preparation are complete.

The one who spoke first was Vampire patriarch, Pylkkänen Vlad.

“We the Vampire Clan’s patriarch, cannot forgive the night raid that happened in our main Vlad house half a month ago! Right now I want to have justice for our house guards! We are no demon, but we won’t allow the Vampire Clan to be made fun of, that’s why we demand you to hand over Seras Gate Vlad and Chrisse Gate Vlad to us unconditionally. If our demand is fulfilled, we will overlook this incident!”
“Yeah, as expected for elder brother!”

Pylkkänen sat back on his chair, acting like a messenger of justice.
As usual Ravino, the second son, acts servile.

Madam rejected their demand.

“We never acknowledge people like you to become the head of Vlad Clan. You are just a thief who stole the seat and taking hostage…che-!”
“Fun! That was just an unfortunate accident. To begin with, a dispute around family inheritance is nothing uncommon for demon clans, on contrary it’s quite a common occurrence even among other clans. There should be no resentment for it.”

Pylkkänen composure hasn’t faltered even if he’s the perpetrator for taking hostages.
Such a shameless person.

Furthermore Pylkkänen pressed for an answer.

“First, the count of your family is unfortunately being enslaved and currently missing. For that reason, we assume the role as the head of the family. And instead of being grateful, you spoke ill of us.”

“…..If that’s the case, then there will be no problem. I will let my daughter Chrisse Gate Vlad to take the role.”

Even Pylkkänen was shocked by that statement.
He hurled insults, spittle flying out from his mouth.

“Impossible! The family head isn’t even here, and you just make a decisions as you please!? Furthermore she’s not even a magician, that incompetent daughter! A kid like that’s doesn’t deserve becoming the head of the Vlad clan!”

This time it’s Madam turn to attack.

“The head of the house is currently missing. That’s why I’ve decided to make my daughter into the head. Even if my husband is here, I doubt he’ll have any objection. Indeed she is still 12, and there is still time before she will grow into an adult at the age of 15. Considering the case, I will assume the role as a temporary head.”

Vampire clan representative, Pylkkänen and second son Ravino became so red that they turn blue.
Their argument is turned and used against them.
Like a boomerang that return and stuck on the thrower body.

Madam pressed on.

“As you said, my daughter probably doesn’t have any magical talent, but she got talent to take the role as the head of the family.”
“E, even a kid can say such a thing! Show us a proof, or we can’t accept it! Evidence!”

Pylkkänen snapped like a lowly dog at a point he can finally make an objection to.

He did so not knowing that the bait contained deadly poison.

"Then we'll give you your proof. Karen-san, we would like to demonstrate a certain magic tool as proof, may we?"
"I don't mind. Pylkkänen-sama, do you have any problem with it?"

Of course Pylkkänen doesn't have any reason to object.
Receiving his consent, Karen gave out permission.

At her signal, I temporarily left my position, to get that certain "magical tool"

From Karen's residence, a metal case was carefully being carried.
Moreover Karen's servants, had implanted a wooden doll that is fully equipped with armours approximately 300 meter away.

""?""

Vampire Clan's patriarch and second son tilted their heads.
Remembering what happened at that night raid, Gigi and company break into a cold sweat.

Used to it, Ojou-sama brought out the M700P.
Loading the magazine, the bolt is cocked.
There is no scope.

Ojou-sama moved away from her seat.
She improved her capability with body strengthening technique.
In offhand shooting stance , aiming approximately 300 meter away at the armoured doll.
Supporting the barrel with her left hand, she touch the trigger with her right hand.

BANG!

A bullet shot out when the trigger is pressed.

Expertly Ojou-sama recock the bolt and a cartridge was ejected.

BANG!

The breastplate was penetrated.

Another cartridge was ejected.

BANG!

At the base, the left leg was blown away.

Another cartridge was ejected.

BANG!

Next, the left arm was blown away at its joint.

BANG!

Lasty, between the slit of the face mask, the right eye was pierced, then the head flew.

Both brothers of the Vampire clan were dumbfounded.

Instead of Ojou-sama, I left a remark.

“Karen-sama, due to a personal reasons Ojou-sama cannot speak. That attack— is there any problem if I’m the one who explains the firing?”
“Vampire Clan’s patriarch, is there any problem?”

Karen seeks permission.
They nod their head.

I once again clears my throat, then begun to explain.

“I’m Lute, a human race butler of the Vlad house. Being presumptuous, I will begun explanation on the magic tool that you had just witness.”

Everyone gathered their gaze to me.

“The magic tool that Ojou-sama used is called, sniper rifle ‘M700P’.

similarly…”

From my pocket I pulled out and shown a ‘7.62mm x 51 NATO bullet’.
The size was about 1.5 times an AA battery.

“From this ammunition a bullet will shoot out. The effective shooting distance is approximately 1.5 kilometer. Even without body strengthening, just like before Ojou-sama could within 1km shoot the head, leg, arm, chest or anywhere she likes. Furthermore all sort of special bullets can be inserted into the ammunition, for example something like a silver bullet.”

In otherwords, within 1km, no matter what are they doing, maybe on a stroll or eating or shopping or defecating or bathing or nursing, one could be assassinated without any magical trace.
In actuality the actual practical effective shooting distance was around 900 meter, but that amount of bluff should be forgiven in a negotiation.

“Moreover, Ojou-sama’s skills are top-notch. Day or night doesn’t matter to her. In fact, she’s even better at night.”

Madam takes over the speech.

“If I am not mistaken, the two of you had a cute daughter and son, correct? Also, from (the wives) relatives a niece as well.”
[“!?”]

Even though it’s not hot, the Vampire Clan’s patriarch and second son was drenched in sweat.
If this indirect threat was only a wordplay, it could be easily dismissed.
However, they were right now being presented with an unpleasant performance.

Would they be able to keep their vigilance, constantly in fear of sniper attacks from 1 km in all directions?
And not only for their own selves, at that.
Their daughters, sons, wives, nieces, and relatives too!

It’s impossible.
It’s unrealistic.

Most of all, nothing exhausts one's mind and body like the constant fear of death.

Madam declared her ultimatum.

"We demand of you one thing only. Never again lay your hands on our Vlad's Count house. In case you break your promise you and every single person who is important to you will experience misfortunes."

The Vampire clan's patriarch and second son instantly raised a white flag. Sparing not even a single second.

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After the meeting, the Vampire Clan patriarch and second son left Gigi and the others behind, returning home as if they were running away.

They begin to acquire a lot of debt, that's why they tried to acquire the count's house. Allured by the prospect of having count's house property and business, they loaned even more money.

Pylkkänen and co trying to get out of the debt by using the money from the count's house, but they failed. Buried by a hole that they created, probably they are going bankrupt.
After that, whatever may happen to them will have nothing to do with us.

The other two guards besides Gigi seemed to be thinking "Whaaatever." and left the Horse House.

Only Gigi-san stayed behind.

I once again ask about what happen half month ago.

"Gigi-san……. Why did you betray the Vlad's house?"
"—I, was born in a certain mountain headquarter in the Beast Continent and my parents are both bandits."

Gigi-san slowly revealed his past.

But, the bandit's master was subjugated by the adventurer. At that

time, both my parents and friends died. Of course Master did not personally kill them, nor did he ever intend to kill them.
They lost their lives as the result of the battle.

Gigi-san was captured by public order corps's soldier.
He's still a child at that time, he was sold as a slave.

Luckily, he had talent as a magician, so he didnt recieve a cruel treatment.
A chance to grow his magic talent then appeared.
When his current master died, and his relative sold Gigi-san.

The one who bought him after he was sold to the Slaver was Count Dan Gate Vlad.
With his skill as a magician, his obedience from his time with his previous master was tested.

When Gigi-san met Master, he realize that he was the adventurer's leader.
Maa, it's troublesome that there are 2-3 people like Master…..

Even with a surprise attack, he realized that it was impossible to attack from the front.
So Gigi-san waited for an opportunity to get his revenge.

"I understand that, my parents and friends from the brigade at that time was trash, but they are still my family. My family died protecting me, ….. and yet even with the enemy right in front of my eyes, I can't do anything for my dead comrades. That's why, I——"

For that reason he colluded with the Vampire clan's patriarch and second brother — to kidnap Madam.

There Gigi-san sat crosslegged.

"… This was the reason I betrayed you, the truth of the matter. Now boil me or put me to the flames or what have you."

He relaxed his body and showed no resistance.
With a dangerous mood hanging in the air, Madam stepped/closer.

"Tsu….."

The well-being of Master is still not known.
Thanks to Gigi-san, none of the maids of the Vlad House had been assaulted by men, nor had there been any deaths, but having said that, the losses were huge.
To me a mere servant, I have no right to stop Madam.

While my head is down a warm hand is placed on my arm.
When I looked up, I found that Madam was giving me a comforting smile.

"Gigi, I will tell you your punishment. For betraying the Vlad's house… You will search for my husband Count Dan. Then apologize to the people, who are involved in this incident. And for the last punishment, I'll let my husband decide. That's all."
"……Madam?"

As expected Gigi-san was shocked by the light punishment he received.

"I have betrayed Madam, by cutting confining and cutting Madam with a silver knife! And yet Madam didn't seek revenge… impossible! If commanded i would even kill myself!"

Gigi-san the accused raised an angry voice.
But Madam ignored it nonchalantly.

"Certainly, betraying the Vlad house is a crime. But Master knew that you are the captured bandit's children from the very beginning. The likelihood of being betrayed had already been considered when hiring you."
"!?"

At that revelation Gigi-san made a look of pure astonishment.

"And yet before I knew it above all else i cared about the Vlad's house, and my husband and I became careless. So considering it was really our mistake, I wanted to entrust it to my husband."

Gigi-san loved the Vlad Family and thought of its interests as much as Merry-san, Mercè-san, or any of the other servants. Enough that I could tell, even with his usual taciturn unsociability.

Had that not been the case, he would not have said such loyal words as "The punishment you gave me is too soft" not "If you so order, I will take my own life".
That's why Master had completely let his guard down.

Gigi-san's wish for vengeance was probably the real thing.
But because of the the long years he had spent with them, feelings of love for Master, Madam, Ojou-sama, and the servants had budded.
But the wish for vengeance that he held for many years in his heart——and his decision that he would "avenge [his] parents" as well, were probably not things that he could wash over.

It was because of Gigi-san that Ojou-sama and I were able to escape the castle as he was the one who said to not participate in the battle as I needed to protect Ojou-sama.
Was the fact that Master escaped with his life not also in large part due to Gigi-san working behind the scenes?
That no deaths had happened this time might also have been because Gigi-san wavered between his vengeance and loyalty.

Madam gave Gigi-san a cold look.

"Do you think suicide will absolve you? You are the Vlad's chief guard, please act in a way to not shame that title. My husband has yet to be found, isn't that right Gigi?"
"…I am unworthy of being the House of Vlad's chief guard. So I will humbly atone for my sins and on my life to find your husband."

Gigi-san with his posture upright, his fists firmly planted in the ground, and his head lowered.
Although no rain was falling, the drops that did indeed fall to the floor were undoubtedly real.

But why Gigi-san, why did you not implement your plan earlier?
If you had acted swiftly Gigi-san, Ojou-sama would have never had the opportunity to escape the castle.

If I ran together with Ojou-sama, expecting it, it's highly probable that Pylkkänen and co will take us down. Coming back with a few people holding guns is unexpected, but Ojou-sama existence was the most pivotal for winning. It would probably have been possible to strike a deal and move Karen's family as well.

Could it be….. Gigi-san's plan from the start was to fail and die?

But now it would be rather boorish to seek the truth of the matter.
I kept silent and resigned my conclusion to the depths of my mind.

Thus Volume 2, Raid on the House of Vlad, has drawn to a conclusion; except for the whereabouts of the Count.

Chapter 049 – Resolve

The night after the meeting..
In the Vlad house's banquet hall that was used to hold Karen's birthday party, a buffet was held in celebration.
Gigi-san as expected did not participate.
After finishing apologizing to all the people he caused trouble for this time, it would seem he intended to head off on a trip to look for the Master.

The main attendees are me, Snow, Chrisse-ojousama, Madam, and Meiya.
Then there is the person in charge of the meeting, Ojousama's close friend, the Centaur Karen, also her other close friends, the three-eyed Barnie, and the Lamia Muir.
The head butler Merry-san, the head maid Mercè-san and the other servants shouted up cheers at the signal of the toast.

Tonight was an unrestricted binge to celebrate the victory of House Vlad.
The maids were split into groups making the food and going around bringing drinks, and participating in the party in shifts.

I am a butler's apprentice, but due to my achievements I've been exempt from work for tonight.
However, even though the other servants still had shifts and were working, having been exempted from work, I stood in a shady corner at the back.

But in spite of that it seems I still stand out, as I had been caught by others as they were taking their shifts.
The first one was Merry-san the head butler.

"Truly, the punishment Gigi received from the Madam is far too light. Normally it is reasonable if someone committed treason that they be immediately executed. Don't you think so too Lute? meeh."
"I guess, however the decision was made by Madam."
"Naturally. It is thanks to Gigi that we got to know the information that Master was sold to the Demon Continent as a slave. I think that part brought about some kindness, meeh."

Though only complaints were uttered, he could not hide the relief in his voice.
After all is said and done, Merry-san's and Gigi-san's relationship is lengthy.

"At Madam's request, from tomorrow on I will train you from scratch on how to be like Gigi, baa~"

Merry-san is the type to get carried away once he begins to lecture.
I brought my hands together in front of my chest and prayed for Gigi-san.

During our conversation Snow appears.
Snow's appearance frees me from Merry-san's ramble.

"Good work. Snow, If you weren't there we wouldn't have gotten to where we are so well. Thank you."
"Uun, I am glad I was able to assist you Lute."

"That's a relief to hear you say so. What are you going to do now, Snow? Are you going back to the Fairy Human Continent Magic School?"
"I told you earlier didn't I? I became a A- ranked Magician as well as a special student; I can graduate without even attending to school. So that way, I can always stay by Lute-kun's side."

Ah, that's right.
Snow became an A- magician so she could meet me as soon as possible.
Just I was relishing in Snow's greatness in more way than one, ojousama came along, pudding in hand.
Snow shows an interest in ojou-sama's pudding, the two get along well and head towards a table.

Now it's Meiya's turn to make an appearance.

"You too Meiya, thanks alot. Without your help, surely we were unable to save madam and vlad house. Really thank you."
"Lute-sama please! Please raise your face! First of all I am Lute's foremost disciple, It is a matter of course to assist you."

Meiya responds in her usual tone.

Now from her she posed to me the same question I did to Snow.

"Lute-sama, what are you going to do after this?"
"As it is as I am a slave, I will stay as a butler's apprentice in the Vlad House and remain ojou's blood bag."
"If that is the case I will stay as well!"
"Whatt!?"
"It is natural for your best disciple to remain at your side!"

Rather than deciding to live here without permission…. I believe there is no way you can selfishly decided on such state of things in this residence. After all, there is far too much focus on her being my foremost disciple.

Madam who walked past just as this was being discussed joined in the conversation.

"Meiya-san is Vlad House's saviour, it's fine with me for her to stay here forever. The same goes for Lute."
"Yes ma'am."
"Also as a reward, I release you from slavery. Now you are free. "
"Ah, Madam!? But your husband is still in the Demon Continent. Why… when the situation is so dire?"

Madam stroked my head to reassure me.

"It is fine. My husband is not one to die easily. Lute should know that best with as many time as you two have dueled."

The Count could certainly win even surrounded by dragons, doing so with a laugh.

"And besides compared to Lute, I know that muscle head better. Of course Gigi will also go on a journey to search for my husband."

Set a thief to catch a thief—so the saying goes.

Madam connects the phrase with "That's why ".

"After being released from slavery, I don't mind if you decide either to stay here and continue serving as a butler or chasing your dream to

create an 『army corps legion to save people』.”
“Madam…. my dream… how?”
“Fufufu, because Snow-san told me. I think it is a rather good dream. So what will you do?”

“…….Please give me some time to think about it.”
“Yes, I do not mind. Well then, Meiya-san I wonder if you would let me hear your story too. Lute, the procedure for releasing you from slavery will be done tomorrow.”
“Eh, wait a… ! I as Lute-sama number one disciple must always be at his service!”

Meiya’s arm was captured and dragged by madam.
Maybe she did that, so that i could think for my decision without outside disturbance.

Thanks to that, I could ponder in tranquility.

‘I wonder why i didn’t immediately chose to fulfill my dream to create an army legion that help troubled people right after i was released as a slave?’

The reason was obvious.
I’m worried about Chrisse-ojousama.

She regained her confidence, but she is still weak to loneliness. That’s why, i believe that i need to stay by her side.

However, someday she will become the head of vlad house and marry another man. Until then will i continue to protect her?
That’s unrealistic. There are things I want to do. I can’t stay at this house until it happen. But….

Like a spiraling darkness, rumination swept over my mind.
While I’m lost in such contemplation, ojou-sama’s three best friends arrive.

“Oh, you are here. Why is the star hiding at the corner?” said Karen Bishop from Centaur race.
“This time I’m the only one who can’t do anything. I’m sorry”, says the three-eyed Barnie Bloomfield.

“If you say that, all I did was contact merry-san and the others.” said Muir Head from Lamia race.

“No, it isn’t just this incident that all of you have helped with, but I’ve been in your care for a great many things, so I really am gratefuly. Truly, thank you very much.”

Lamia Muir came to give me her thanks with a bittersweet smile.

“Well, I’m glad that you think that way, but… Ah, by the way, I know that you’ve been freed from slavery, but what is it that you intend on doing from now on?”
“…..You heard that?”

“I did, sorry. Though I did not mean to overhear.”

Barnie of the three-eyed triple apologized profusely.
I smiled in response and said that there wasn’t a problem.

“It’s okay. It’s not like it’s something unpleasant for others to hear, after all.”
“You say it’s not unpleasant to hear, but… Lute might quit being a butler. Does Chrisse know about it?”
“….. No.”

When I said that out, the Karen’s voice became heavy.

“Whoa, Karen.”
“…I know, Muir. Sorry Lute, it was a nasty question. We didn’t come here to condemn you, but rather to pass on a message.”
“Message?”
“Aah, It is from Chrisse. It seems she wants you to come to her room.”

Thinking about what she said, i looked inside the room.
Certainly I cannot find ojou-sama.
Not so long ago, she supposedly was eating pudding and mille crepe with Snow. Just when did she….

“Thank you very much. Now then, if you’ll excuse me, I shall go to meet ojousama.”

To the three, I lower my head and exit the hall.
On the way I meet the head maid Merry-san informing her I was headed to ojou-sama's room.

She flashed me a sweet smile.

Said "Good luck Lute", and left..

Luck with what?

I turn the other way and continue down the familiar corridor. Finally arriving at Ojou-sama's door.

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After knocking, i place my hand on the door.
After a few months, it was the nostalgic Ojou-sama room.
When rescuing madam, there was no time to visit this room.

The room was dark.
Only starlights pass through the window.

"Ojou-sama, it's Lute. I'm here to deliver a massage from Karen and the others."

Just like when we met for the first time, ojou-sama laid roundly on the bed covered with a blanket.

She was peeking through the miniboard with a cute red face.

"Ojou-sama?"
[Sit here please.]

She tapped the mini blackboard next to her.
Per her order, I sat on the bed.

Ojou-sama with a flop sat next to me, then looked up into my face.
Her eyes were wet and tears could drop at any time.

"…tsu!"

Without realizing, I was pushed down by Ojou-sama.

On her small lips, mine lays on the bottom.
It was an immature kiss, where teeths collided because she was little bit too forceful.

Gently, our lips separated.
Ojou-sama's face redden, as blood rush to her head.

"O, ojou-sama!?"
"…you."
"!?"

I hear her voice for the first time.
The shock from it was greater than the kiss.
Ojousama gazed straight at me as she confessed.

"Lu, Lute….. Onii-chan, I like, you."

These are the first words I have ever heard from Ojou-sama.

She struggled desperately to squeeze out her words in an attempt to adequately express her feelings.

"I love… you. Make Chrisse….. your wife please."

Stuttering because she hasn't spoken for a long time, but her passionate feelings reached me.

With her faltering voice, she continued to speak.
About how she heard from Snow about my dream—— 『I want to help those looking for help』 . And how predicting that I would leave one day, she didn't want to part from me, and realised that she wanted to stay by my side forever.
About how she wanted to stay by my side, and in the same way that she was saved by me, she too wanted to save other people,

About how she loved me, didn't want to part from me, and wanted to

follow me to the end of the world.

Although she faltered, Chrisse-Ojousama gave it her all to convey that to me.
Pitiful like a small child, she was really lovable.
My chest gradually grew hot.
However, I already have Snow——
Had the orders in which I met them been different, I wonder how my reply would have been.

I placed my hand on Ojousama's shoulder, and stood up.
Sitting down once more, I corrected my posture.

"I'm really happy that you feel that way, Ojousama. However… I have Snow as my fiancée. I cannot betray her."
"Lut, e-Oniich, an, I li… ke, you. I love, you. I'll try, my best, with the rif, le. So… please,, don't leave … me"
"…!"

That's foul play.
There's no way that I could abandon Ojousama.

Thanks to her, I was picked up by the Vlad House.
Had things gone badly, I might have been sold as a male prostitute, or sent to work in a mine until I died.
And moreover, she might become depressed and hole up in her room again.
In that room that even the sunlight couldn't enter. Ojousama would once again stop moving forward, and spend a long time by herself.

Just having that scene float through my mind made my heart feel like it was being blended to shreds.
What's more, just imagining another man's hands run over her limbs was enough to make me feel violently ill.
I want to protect her.
I want her to be mine.

Chrisse Gate Vlad is adorable…-!

But still! Even still——!
I can't betray Snow!

"I like you too, Ojousama. I love you. However… I also love Snow. It is… impossible for me, to betray her."
"-…."

Ojousama's shoulders dropped sadly.
She sluggishly reached her hand out for her mini-blackboard.

[As expected, I could not win against Snow-Oneechan.]
"…I'm sorry. But, had the order in which I met you two been the other way around, I think the result would have been different."
[I understand… Then, I will also give my all to support you, as your second wife, Oniichan.]
"Yeah. You'll have to give your all as my second wife… Huh?"

[Snow-Oneechan and I made a promise. If I wasn't able to become the first wife, then I would marry Oniichan as the second wife.]
"HUH!? When was this?"
[Our late-night meeting at Meiya-san's house.]

Meiya, night, night meeting… *That* time!?
Ojousama hiding bashfully behind Snow wasn't because she heard about my embarrassing past!?

As I was recalling that day, with good timing, Snow came along into the room.

"Chrisse-chan, are you finished talking?"
[Yes. I could not win against you, Snow-Oneechan. However, I want to support Oniichan from now on as his second wife.]
"Ehehehe, I believed in you, Lute-kun. As you'd expect, the bonds between childhood friends who've been together since they were born are quite strong, huh? But you don't have to worry, Chrisse-chan. Lute-kun is definitely the type of person who'll love us equally without caring about first or second, after all."
[All right! I will try my best as well, to support Oniichan with you, Snow-Oneechan!]
"Mn! From now on, let's try our best together."

The two of them easily consented to bigamy.

Certainly, in this world and age, polygamy and the like isn't really uncommon.
It's cultural differences…

"W-, Wait! Wait a moment! Ojousama is already the head of the Vlad House! Can you even marry into somebody else's family?"
『There are no problems. The vampire race is a long-lived race, so as the family head on paper, I can give birth to a successor, and have that child inherit the position instead. That's why there isn't a problem with marrying you, Oniichan. Okaasama has already approved.』

SUGOI , the prep has already been dealt with?

And so, Ojousama and Snow began to talk amicably.
It seems that the two of them are deciding on the timetable and rules for our newlywed life.
Since the two of them seem to be having fun, it would be tasteless for me to say anything more.

And moreover, Ojousama——now my wife, Chrisse, was truly happy.
I love her too after all, and I cherish her. She gets along with Snow, too.

And so I was able to gain a brilliant sniper as my second wife.

Volume 3 End

Next Time

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